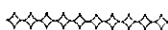


ON THE LAND

MARKET REPORTS.

At Burnside last week the yarding consisted of 200 head of good quality fat cattle, prices being on a par with the previous week's rates. Prime heavy bullocks made from £18 to £20 5s, extra to £22 15s, prime £15 10s to £17 17s 6d, medium from £12, prime heifers and cows £12 5s to £14, medium £10 to £11 10s, light from £8 10s. Fat Sheep.—2450 were yarded, the quality being fair. The market opened at an advance of 1s to 1s 6d above the preceding week's rates, but towards the middle of the sale prices receded to about those rates. Prime heavy wethers made 26s to 28s 6d, extra to 30s 9d, prime 22s 6d to 25s, medium 17s 9d to 20s 6d, light 15s 6d, prime ewes 17s 3d to 19s 6d, medium 15s 9d to 16 3d. Pigs.—A medium yarding, all classes being represented. The demand was good, and small pigs sold exceptionally well. Large pigs realised values on a par with the previous week's rates. Best baconers realised from 8½d to 9d per lb, and best porkers from 9d to 9½d per lb.

At Addington market last week there was a large attendance. The yarding of fat sheep and cattle were high. Store sheep were yarded in small numbers, but in other sections the penning was about average. Fat Sheep.—About 12 full races were forward, mostly wethers. The quality generally was good, with some really prime stuff. Bidding opened at slightly lower rates than the previous week's, and all round there was an easing in values, of about 1s per head. Four freezing buyers operated. Extra prime wethers made from 23s 6d to 28s 6d, prime 18s 9d to 20s 9d, medium 15s 9d to 18s, light and unfinished 14s to 15s 3d, prime ewes 13s to 14s 9d, light and unfinished 10s 9d to 12s 9d, prime hoggets 14s 9d to 20s 1d, ordinary 9s 6d to 15s 6d. Fat Cattle.—The quality all round was above the average. The sale opened moderately well, but eased as it progressed. Prices receded 30s to 40s per head. Quotations:—Extra prime bullocks, up to £24 15s, prime £15 to £18 17s 6d, medium £10 10s to £14 10s, light and unfinished £6 to £10, extra prime heifers, up to £14 5s, prime £9 15s to £10 10s, ordinary £5 to £9, prime cows £9 to £12 15s, ordinary £5 15s to £8 10s. Vealers.—Runners, up to £7, good vealers £3 10s to £5, medium £2 10s to £3 5s, small to £2 5s. Fat Pigs.—Choppers £5 to £8 5s, light baconers £4 15s to £5 10s, heavy £6 to £7, extra heavy £7 12s 6d to £8 (average price per lb., 9d to 9½d), light porkers £2 18s to £3 10s, heavy £3 15s to £4 12s (average price per lb., 10½d).



THE OUTLAWED KEA: RAPIDLY BECOMING EXTINCT.

Many years ago there was considerable controversy among runholders in the high sheep country in the South Island as to whether the kea was a carnivorous bird, for this species of the hawk tribe was reputed to have a liking for live mutton (says the *Farmer's Union Advocate*). Eventually the weight of evidence was held to be against the kea, and he was proclaimed an outlaw. The Government placed a price on the bird's head, 1s bounty being paid out of the Exchequer for the beaks of the marauder. Since then sporadic warfare has been waged against keas throughout Canterbury and Otago, but the birds are hard to kill and cartridges are high priced.

In October of last year, however, the Government decided to pay a bounty of 5s to any person producing the beak of a kea. The mortality amongst the birds immediately increased out of all proportion to the previous year's killings. In point of fact since last October the Government has paid out approximately £900 in bounty on 3500 beaks, and the tally is fast mounting up. In the year 1919-20, when the bounty of 1s obtained, only £46 was paid out for the destruction of the feathered pest.

Obviously all the high-country musterers needed to persuade them to undertake the wholesale slaughter of the birds was sufficient monetary inducement. By shooting a couple of keas each day in the week, station hands can earn a good wage, as in addition to the Government bounty of 5s some county councils pay a further sum—in some cases 2s 6d—for each beak turned in.

If the present rate of destruction continues, the kea should before long be numbered in the category of the dodo and the moa.



THE RETENTION OF SOIL MOISTURE.

Hoing is generally employed as a means of destroying weeds and, incidentally, of breaking up the soil and exposing it to the beneficent influences of the atmosphere; but under certain conditions it may fulfil a still more important office—viz., that of retaining moisture through the instrumentality of the superficial dust mulch which the work creates (writes "Talycafn" in the *Agricultural Gazette*). Under almost any condition of drought there is sufficient moisture in the depths of the soil to support vegetable life. This moisture is ever working upwards to the surface by capillary action, to be evaporated into the atmosphere when coming under the influence of the sun and wind. It follows, therefore, that if we can prevent it from being dissipated in the manner stated, crops will be able to carry on during rainless periods for a much longer period than would otherwise be possible. It matters little what the tool employed consists of in working the top soil to a fine tilth, the hoe, harrow or hand cultivator all doing the work equally well in their respective spheres. The object is to form in dry weather a layer of fine, dusty soil, which shall so "blanket" the ground that the ascending moisture cannot escape before the roots of the crop can absorb it. The principle is one that has been adopted with signal success in many of the "dry belts" of America, fine crops of wheat, fruit, and other things being grown in almost rainless deserts.

During the recent drought I came across a useful object lesson illustrating the effect of the dust mulch in the conservation of moisture. An orchard had been planted in extremely sandy soil whose texture was such that it was liable to dry out very quickly in summer. The land was arable and stocked rather thickly with poultry—so thickly, in fact, that the whole of the surface was reduced to dust. By appearance, one would have said that the bone-dry soil, gleaming white in the burning sun, would be unable to sustain anything less fitted for such conditions than a cactus. But the fruit trees were the picture of health, and they carried a bountiful crop. No watering had ever been carried out, but the poultry had done the harrowing or its equivalent, and one had only to remove a few inches of that dusty surface to find moisture, and so discover the explanation and realise the effects of one of the great principles of practical agriculture.

Some soils will naturally yield more freely to the effect of this summer hoeing than others. But there are few so unkindly that they will not respond if tackled at the right time and worked often enough. The roller, will of course, help the harrow where it is possible to use it at this season, as in arable orchards; but the great thing is to persist in the work, whether there are weeds to kill or not. If a cloud of dust follows the teams so much the better—it is a sure indication that the work is having the desired effect.

Where hand labor is employed for the hoeing of field and garden crops, such as roots and potatoes, the hand cultivator mentioned is a much better tool to use than the hoe. This weapon will not be of much use for the destruction of weeds, once these are past the seedling stage; but on fairly clean land it will do the job with less labor, in half the time, and with greater satisfaction than a hoe of any sort. As to harrows the average zigzag pattern generally in use is quite unnecessarily heavy for the work in question, and too long in the spikes.

New Zealand leads the world in Disc Harrows. The "Steel Queen" model has been copied in Great Britain, Canada, and United States and holds probably 75 per cent. of the trade in New Zealand. No implement has been developed in recent years which has done so much for the farm. The 1921 "Steel Queen" is still the leader, which is no more expensive than its various imitations! Is your money buying the original and best, or the inferior copy? Over 11,000 "Steel Queens" sold!

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