

and winter snow from the west or southwest, all have their varied effects upon the plant-life and pastures. At the western boundary of Cora Lynn, rainfall averages 62.09 in., but on the eastern margin of the run it amounts to only 35.81 in.

It's not surprising that such unusual conditions produce unusual series of vegetation: tussock steppe, southern beech forest, scrubland, and alpine herb fields. Ninety years ago the tussocks and other bunched grasses spread from riverbeds to slopes at least 3,000 ft. high. Sheep found few of the tussocks tasty, and searched for the less conspicuous grasses. The settlers did not understand that tussocks not only preserved, but enriched the topsoil, so they set fire, ruthlessly, to the matted grassy growth of centuries. These burnings, repeated again and again, produced a fresh new growth, but simultaneously they weakened seriously the plant-life and vegetable mould.

Also (as has happened in most tussock grasslands) the natural pastures of Grasmere and Cora Lynn were seriously overstocked. The close-cropping Merino added to the destruction of the more tasty herbs and grasses. Deer, rabbits (fortunately not serious in the Upper Waimakariri), and weeds assisted the deterioration.

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To-day on the Grasmere - Cora Lynn run, work is directed from the old limestone home at Grasmere. The unit is well situated towards the sun, with few slopes snow-bound all winter. The foundation of the flock of half-breds—Merino-Romney and Merino-Leicester—



is some 5,000 ewes, while 3,000 heavy hardy wethers and several hundred dry ewes graze on the poorer, more broken country. In the summer months the run accommodates more than 3,500 lambs. The flock, both ewes and wethers, is renewed from the 3,000 hoggets carried annually, and yields each year a clip of 200 bales (80,000 lb.), worth £4,000.

Although the 300 acres of cultivated land are well fenced, many of the blocks have only natural boundaries, such as rocky bluffs, rivers, and the bush. But these serve pretty well. High-country sheep don't often stray from the property on which they're bred.

An October spring, bringing lambs with the new grass, keeps all hands busy, and the tempo of work steadily increases, until it reaches its peak in December. Then hired men aid in shearing, wool-classing, and baling. Closely-shorn sheep will die in cold, unseasonable weather, so the machines are used only for crutching. Hand blades clip the fleeces, and the shorn wethers and dry ewes are driven to the "summer country"—rugged, scrubby highlands. Ewes and lambs go to the blocks, while the "winter country" is given a brief rest.

In March and April the whole run is mustered. The lambs are weaned, the ewes and wethers culled, and surplus stock is sent to the plains, either for fattening or direct to the freezing-works. The rest of the sheep are dipped, and the rams are put to the ewes in May. Now the cold season is approaching, so most of the sheep go on to "winter country" and "the farm."

