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SALES OF LIVESTOCK AT HOMEBUSH, SYDNEY.Falling-off in supplies of sheep.

The numbers penned for sale during the period showed a further decline, the offerings totalling 236,629 head as compared with 292,614 during January.

Inferior sheep plentiful.

Wethers and ewes yarded totalled 155,683. Plain to medium quality sheep were fairly well in evidence, although medium to good trade descriptions constituted a fair percentage of the supplies. Prime sheep, particularly heavy grades, were comparatively scarce, although towards the close of the month a somewhat larger proportion of good quality wethers and ewes was noticeable at several sales.

Values firm at closing.

At the first auction held in February a very strong demand ruled, values generally advancing by from 1/- to 2/- per head. Throughout the greater part of the month, however, an easier trend was noticeable, particularly in relation to the plainer descriptions of sheep. However, rain in some country districts late in the month resulted in a falling-off in supplies with a consequent firming of values.

Prices paid for heavy wethers mostly ranged from 5½d to 6½d, although occasionally 7d per lb. was realised at sales held in the first half of the month. Light wethers sold up to 7½d early in the period but the general range was 6d to 6½ per lb. At closing light wethers sold at 5½d to 6½d and heavy at 5d to 5½d per lb. Heavy ewes at the end of the period were worth 4½d to 5d and light ewes from 4½d to 5½d per lb.

Lamb supplies show further decline.

The lamb offerings aggregated 80,946, representing a decline of approximately 39,000 head on the previous month's total. Moderate numbers of good to prime lambs were included in supplies but the great bulk comprised fair to good trade lines.

Lamb prices generally firm.

Demand for lambs, particularly good quality descriptions, generally was satisfactory and values for the most part were well maintained, although, in common with sheep, rates in the latter part of the month generally showed an easier tendency. Good light lambs mostly sold at 8d to 9d per lb., with odd sales of extra good quality at times being effected at 9½d per lb. Heavy grades of good quality mostly changed hands at 7½d to 8½d per lb.

General.

There were indications that supplies of sheep and lambs would be light early in March owing to improved seasonal conditions in some parts of the State. This may possibly result in values in the immediate future being maintained at current levels.

Reduced cattle supplies.

Due principally to drought conditions, followed by rain in many parts of the State, consignments of cattle during February, 1945, were light to moderate only. As a result, the monthly aggregate of 13,584 head was well below that of January. Auctions in the store section, however, showed an increase, supplies totalling 2,742 head.

The general quality was most variable and while there was an occasional good representation of trade stock the average standard was disappointing, many beasts forward being plain in the extreme. Furthermore, lightweights comprised the great bulk of the pennings.

Further beneficial rain was received during February but the falls were confined chiefly to the north-eastern section of the State and extreme drought conditions continued to prevail in many parts of the western and southern portions.

During the month action was taken to fix ceiling price levels in butcher shops on a uniform basis.

Higher prices for bullocks.

Bullocks, for the most part, were in limited supply and comprised chiefly good trade lightweights, heavy descriptions being scarce at times. The market fluctuated considerably but generally values were much higher than during the previous month. When the market was at its weakest, lightweight bullocks were quoted at 51/- to 56/- per 100 lb., but rates exceeded 60/- per 100 lb. on more than one occasion. Outside competition caused values of more weighty lines to soar at times and early in the period a line of prime Shorthorns weighing about 730 lb. realised £27.1.0 per head, or 74/- per 100 lb. This rate is little under the peak level of recent years.

Good quality steers in short supply.

Steers were in moderate supply but while good trade to prime drafts were fairly well represented on occasions plainer quality lightweights generally predominated. Demand was keen and higher prices prevailed. Quotations for good quality lines frequently exceeded 60/- per 100 lb. and on one occasion reached 72/- per 100 lb.

Steady market for cows.

Cows were comparatively well supplied but quality was most variable. Medium to fair trade lightweights were mostly in evidence but prime weighty sorts were scarce at times. Demand was steady and values showed only a small degree of fluctuation, prices for good quality descriptions averaging about 50/- per 100 lb.

Heifers in fair supply.

Heifers made a fair showing and good trade to prime medium weights were occasionally well in evidence. Generally, however, lightweights formed the great bulk of supplies. Prices advanced sharply and, for the greater part of the month, prices ranged to 61/- per 100 lb.

Vealers sell well.

Truckings of vealers were moderate and early in the period good trade sorts were well represented amongst the medium to heavy weights. The general quality subsequently was disappointing and although all grades of weight were available plain sorts predominated. The market was very strong and on most sale days quotations reached 68/- per 100 lb. The highest was 73/-.

Pigs well supplied.

Consignments of pigs during February, 1945, were consistently heavy and the aggregate for the four sale days was 11,052 head, including 7,890 received by rail. Pigs disposed of by private treaty accounted for an additional 662 head. Small store pigs comprised a fairly substantial percentage of pennings.

Extra heavy baconers in demand.

Baconers were well supplied and consisted chiefly of fair to good heavy trade descriptions. The market opened very firm and on the following sale day rates for extra heavy types showed a further improvement, prime lines selling to £7.8.6 per head. Values subsequently fluctuated somewhat although the market at closing was more even than for some time past. On a carcass equivalent basis quotations ranged chiefly from 8½d to 9½d per lb. A noticeable feature was the improvement in values of pigs dressing about 200 lb. or little more.

Enhanced values of boars.

Backfatters made a moderate showing and the consignments included a larger proportion of prime heavy descriptions. Good trade medium weights, however, predominated.

A very firm market prevailed throughout the period and most pigs were sold at the equivalent of 5½d and 6d per lb.

Boar pigs are selling remarkably well and present values are out of all proportion to pre-war levels. Officially, of course, all pigs dressing in excess of 200 lb. are rated the same value per lb. irrespective of size, age, sex or quality. The highest price paid per head was £15.1.0 in respect of a large boar which dressed 715 lb.

Store pigs sell at high prices.

Porkers were in limited supply at opening but on the remaining sale days they made the best showing for some time. All grades of weight were represented and the majority could be classed as stores. Despite the increased numbers available, demand continued to be exceptionally keen. A large proportion of the lightweights were valued at 1/- per lb. or more and some quotations reached as high as 1/6 per lb. Early in the period even heavy porkers were quoted to 1/- per lb.

(S.D. Robertson and  
J.R. Williams).

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SALES  
AT CITY MUNICIPAL MARKETS, SYDNEY.

Apples in request.

Receivals of apples from orchards within New South Wales were light. Coloured dessert varieties were sought after and the ceiling price was obtained for Jonathan, Delicious, McIntosh Red and Fanny of the best trade sizes. Early in the month Gravenstein were available and this variety also sold well. Large Granny Smiths realised the maximum but rates for medium to small fruit were variable.

Consignments comprising a number of different varieties were received from Victoria and South Australia, including a good percentage of Jonathans which met a ready sale. Late in the month the first of the new season's Tasmanian apples, mainly Worcester Pearmain and Alfriston, arrived on the market.

Firmer market for choice pears.

Large quantities of Williams pears came to hand from Victoria. Demand generally was good for choice, green packs and values showed an upward trend as the month progressed. Ripe fruit was plentiful at times and fairly low prices had to be accepted to enable clearances to be made. Supplies from within New South Wales were light; choice packs met a good inquiry at firm rates. Small consignments of Beurre Bosc were also received and prompt clearances were effected.