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GENERAL NOTES AND NEWS.

As a result of a recent survey it has been estimated that the number of sheep and lambs lost in New South Wales as a direct result of the drought approximates 5,600,000 head, with the prospect of additional severe losses if the drought does not break in the near future. Indirect losses will be substantial in drought-stricken areas inasmuch as the lamb "drop" will be much below normal. The figure mentioned represents drought losses only and would no doubt be considerably higher if losses from all causes were taken into account.

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The Minister for Agriculture recently received a deputation representative of the Underwriters' Association and the Government Insurance Office to consider a revised plan for hail insurance in relation to cereal crops.

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At a recent conference between the Town Hall Authorities and the Police Department, the question of issuing of additional licenses to fruit-stand holders in the City was considered. Representations have been made on a number of occasions that fruit and vegetables in heavy supply might become more readily available to consumers at reduced costs if additional licenses were granted.

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The City Markets Advisory Committee has given some consideration to the suggestion made by the Chamber of Fruit and Vegetable Industries that the whole of the City Municipal Markets be closed for business on Saturday mornings during the months of June, July and August of each year. Because of the many interests involved, and the expression of conflicting views at a recent meeting, the whole matter is to be the subject of further investigation at a special meeting of the Committee to be held in a couple of week's time.

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In response to a request made through the Australian Broadcasting Commission, arrangements have been completed for an additional report regarding the Homebush Stock Auctions to be supplied by Officers of the Marketing Division for broadcasting by National and Regional Stations at approximately 1.25 p.m. on each sale day. These reports will supplement those already supplied for the purpose of broadcasting.

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Broom millet, in common with so many other crops, suffered severely from drought this season. An official forecast places the prospective yield of fibre at 6,500 cwts., compared with a recorded yield of 10,805 cwts. in season 1943;44.

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For the 1945-46 tobacco crop, a Commonwealth production goal of 8,000 acres has been set. The New South Wales State target is 600 acres. For the 1943-44 season (the latest available official figure) the acreage under tobacco in New South Wales was 657 acres.

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Prospects for a good Australian sugar crop this year are reported to be most encouraging, although the New South Wales share of the crop will be rather smaller than normal. Production for 1944 was estimated at 668,000 tons (Queensland 641,000 tons; N.S.W. 27,000 tons.)

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Main crop potato contracts written in this State for the 1944-45 season totalled 25,335 acres, compared with 22,036 acres in 1943-44, and 16,098 acres in 1942-43.

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The New South Wales maize crop for 1944-45 will probably be in the vicinity of 2,250,000 bushels, the lowest for many years. Fair average yields are being obtained on the North Coast and Northern Tablelands, but elsewhere there have been widespread failures. The sowing season was one of the worst on record over such a wide area.

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The Commonwealth Minister for Commerce and Agriculture has announced that by the middle of April slightly more than 1,000,000 bushels of wheat had arrived in New South Wales from South and Western Australia. Altogether, about 7,000,000 bushels would be imported from those States.

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The allotment of wheat in New South Wales for the priority industries - pigs, poultry and dairying - during April has been 275,000 bushels weekly. In May the weekly allotment would be 220,000 bushels. It is hoped to stabilise weekly delivery figures in June and subsequent months at around 200,000 bushels weekly.

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