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SALES OF LIVESTOCK AT HOMEBUSH, SYDNEY.Numbers improve appreciably.

The numbers of sheep and lambs penned during March totalled 299,219 head, representing an increase of approximately 63,000 head compared with the previous month.

Prime sheep scarce.

Although more grown sheep were available, (pennings for the period totalling 184,355 head) the proportion of good quality lines was relatively light. Prime heavy wethers were in very short supply but there was a much better representation of good ewes. Plain descriptions were numerous while medium to good trade quality sheep, comprising chiefly light weights, were in moderate supply.

Mutton generally cheaper.

The increase in supplies contributed largely to the general decline in mutton prices. Values at opening sales did not vary appreciably from those recorded at the close of the previous month but, subsequently, generally lower rates ruled. For the most part the cost of mutton at the end of March was approximately $5\frac{1}{2}$ d to 1d per lb. lower than at opening sales. At times, prime light wethers were worth $6\frac{1}{2}$ d per lb. compared with the peak price of $7\frac{1}{2}$ d in February and heavy descriptions $5\frac{3}{4}$ d as against 7d per lb. In the main, however, operators paid 4d to $5\frac{1}{2}$ d for heavy wethers, with odd lots of prime at $5\frac{1}{2}$ d per lb. Light weights made from $4\frac{1}{2}$ d to $5\frac{1}{2}$ d, although at times prime lots realised $5\frac{3}{4}$ d to 6d per lb. Heavy ewes sold to 5d and light to $5\frac{1}{2}$ d per lb. but rates generally ranged from $3\frac{1}{2}$ d to $4\frac{1}{2}$ d and 4d to 5d per lb. for heavy and light, respectively. Plain to medium grades cleared at relatively lower levels. The shortage of good quality wethers stimulated demand for good quality ewes and generally enhanced values.

Lambs in heavier supply.

The supply of lambs showed considerable improvement, a total of 114,864 head being on offer or about 34,000 more than last month's aggregate. Generally, quality was better than that of the grown sheep, the percentage of medium trade lines being relatively lighter. Prime light lambs and suckers were fairly scarce but good to prime heavy grades were fairly well represented. Summer lambs preponderated, suckers generally being in short supply.

Lamb prices decline.

Inquiry for good to prime lambs for the most part was keen but, as a result of the larger numbers offering, prices were not maintained at the high levels which prevailed in February.

Generally the cost of lamb at closing was from $\frac{1}{2}$ d to $\frac{1}{2}$ d per lb. lower than at opening auctions. The best price paid in February for prime lamb was $9\frac{1}{2}$ d per lb. but similar grades of lamb were obtained for 9d during March. Generally, good quality suckers mostly realised from $7\frac{3}{4}$ d to $8\frac{1}{4}$ d and prime light lambs $7\frac{1}{2}$ d to $8\frac{1}{2}$ d per lb. On occasions, good to prime heavy lambs made $8\frac{1}{2}$ d per lb. but a large proportion realised from 7d to 8d. Values for hoggets were reasonably well maintained and up to 8d per lb. was obtained, but generally prices ranged from $6\frac{1}{2}$ d to $7\frac{1}{2}$ d, with occasional lines at $7\frac{3}{4}$ d per lb.

Variable cattle supplies.

Cattle supplies during March, 1945, were again fairly light, particularly early in the period. The monthly aggregate for the nine sale days was 14,798 head, including the relatively large number of 4,396 auctioned in the store section. Quality was most variable and a substantial proportion of the pennings comprised small, inferior grade stock. The weather during March was chiefly dry and the more promising outlook indicated at the close of February was not maintained. Relieving rains, however, were received in many areas during early April.

Supplies of bullocks limited.

Supplies of bullocks were even more limited than during February, while very few heavy descriptions were noted. The market fluctuated considerably but demand was always keen and good quality descriptions sold at prices which averaged the equivalent of about 60/- per 100 lb. The extreme level was 73/-.

Prime steers scarce.

Steers were scarce during the first half of the period but consignments subsequently increased considerably. Inferior lightweights predominated, prime descriptions generally being available in odd lots only. The market continued firm and values of prime lines ranged chiefly from 59/- to 64/- per 100 lb. Inquiry for plainer stock was weaker at times and on several occasions some fair to good trade lines did not exceed 50/- per 100 lb.

Cows sell at increased prices.

Cows were available in limited numbers only, especially prime heavy weights, although the position improved during the latter half of the month. Demand for good quality drafts was exceptionally keen and the market improved steadily until the third week when quotations ranged to 56/- per 100 lb. With an increase in supplies, however, prices receded and at closing 48/- per 100 lb. was the best price obtained.

Firm market for heifers.

Pennings of heifers fluctuated considerably and generally supplies comprised small fair to good trade descriptions. However, fair numbers of good quality medium weights were noticed towards the close. The market was very firm and prime lightweights continued to realise to 61/- per 100 lb. for the greater part of the month. Values showed some recession, however, towards the close of March.

For the most part, vealers were moderately supplied and the general quality was only fair. Values were maintained at high levels during the greater part of the period, quotations ranging chiefly to 68/- per 100 lb. and 73/- on one occasion. At closing, however, rates were lower, 60/- per 100 lb. being the highest price noted.

Fewer pigs available.

Consignments of pigs during March, 1945, were very irregular from the point of view of numbers arriving and the aggregate for the period was 9,176 head or some 1,876 less than in the previous month. Receipts by rail accounted for 6,201 and, in addition to those submitted at auction, 329 were disposed of by private treaty.

Pennings on the opening sale-day were affected considerably by an industrial dispute at the Homebush Abattoirs. On this occasion, marketing operations were confined to store buying but a sale was held on the following day to dispose of the remainder of the consignments.

Firm market for baconers.

Baconers continued to be well represented although the quality of a substantial proportion could be described as fair trade only. All grades of weight were available, extra heavy descriptions making a particularly good showing on one occasion.

A very firm market ruled for heavy baconers but prices were irregular at times for light weights. Alterations in values, however, were not material. Rates per head ranged to £7.10.6, while the range in quotations on a per lb. basis was chiefly from 8^{sd} to 9^{sd}. Prime extra heavy baconers, estimated to exceed 200 lb. dressed, continued to sell at enhanced rates.

Backfatters in keen demand.

Pennings of backfatters were moderate and medium to heavy weights made a fairly good showing. Demand was keen early in the period and values of prime heavy sorts advanced by from 15/- to 30/- per head and sold to 6^{sd} per lb. The higher rates, however, were not maintained during the latter half of the month.

Numbers of porkers available were irregular, although this class was well represented at the opening and final sale. All grades of weight and quality were submitted from very small store pigs to good trade heavy porkers.

Request continued to be very keen and, although values fluctuated, many sales were effected at rates equivalent to 1/3d per lb. The highest equivalent for heavy porkers, however, was 10½d.

(G. Coloman and
J.R. Williams.)

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SALES AT CITY MUNICIPAL MARKETS, SYDNEY.

Apples sell freely.

There was a very good demand for apples and values of choice, colored, dessert fruit were maintained at high levels. Supplies from within New South Wales were light, the market being dependent mainly on consignments from Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. Jonathans found a ready sale, while the relatively small quantities of Delicious available were cleared quickly, both varieties realising up to 27/- per bushel, although the Tasmanian Jonathans were slightly lower, the top rate being 25/-. Granny Smiths were lightly stocked and large fruit realised the ceiling rate.

Towards the close of the month a fairly wide range of Tasmanian varieties was on offer, Jonathan, Cox's Orange and Ribston Pippin, Duke of Clarence, Delicious, Alexander, Alfriston and Worcester Pearmain being on offer. Apart from the Delicious and Jonathans, rates ranged from 11/- to 20/-, according to variety.

During March of last year the maximum rate for Jonathan, Delicious and Granny Smith was fixed at 18/- and other varieties at 15/-, but this season no adjustment of the ceiling rate of 27/- has been made.

Pears well supplied.

Large quantities of Williams pears were received from Victoria but supplies from local sources were only moderate. Demand was good until towards the close of the month when increased consignments of Packham's Triumph were forward, including a shipment from Tasmania. Some packs of Williams reached maturity quickly and these lines, as well as very small fruit, had to be cleared at well below the levels requested for choice green packs of the best sizes. Request for Packham's was satisfactory at rates ranging from 16/- to 20/- per bushel. Small quantities of Beurre Bosc and a few other varieties were obtainable.