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There is every indication that this year's wheat sowing will be greatly increased, possibly to record levels. With winter fallow apparently above average, and large areas which failed last year, much of the crop will be sown on land in good heart and condition.

Maize prospects from Tableland crops, due to frost, scalding and dry weather, are not good; coastal crops are rather better. Grain sorghum has withstood the trying summer better than maize, but some areas in the north-west will give disappointing yields; on the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area grain sorghum is giving very encouraging results.

The rice crop gives every indication of heading out well, and, despite a fair amount of weed growth, yields should be high.

The broom millet crop from the whole State should not be far off the State average of 650 tons. In spite of adverse conditions earlier along the Coast, some 200 tons are expected from the Richmond River, and 250 tons from the Hunter and Manning. Conditions have been generally favourable in the Tumut-Gundagai district.

Banana production has suffered heavily from the recent torrential rains, and crops are expected to yield some 20 per cent. less than last year.

Egg production is still at a higher level than last year. Receipts by the Egg Marketing Board for the 28 weeks to 11th January, 1947, totalled 35.8 m. dozen, compared with 34.0 m. dozen for the corresponding period a year ago.

SALES OF LIVESTOCK AT HOMEBUSH, SYDNEY.

January, 1947.

SHEEP.

Reduced Numbers Yarded.

A further decline in the supplies of sheep and lambs available occurred during the month, due partly to the intervention of public holidays reducing the number of sale days to seven, the closure of retail butchers' shops as a protest against the prices being paid for carcasses and the continuation of drought conditions in many parts of the State, which has considerably curtailed the supplies of fat sheep and lambs for slaughter. A total of 199,380 head of sheep and lambs was penned, representing a decline of about 11,000 head on the previous month's aggregate. Early in the month supplies were very light, being in the vicinity of 9,000 head, but offerings later improved and at the closing sale had reached about 53,000 head.

Sheep Well Supplied.

Despite a decrease in the overall supplies, the penning of grown sheep showed an increase, 120,131 head being offered. Plain to medium quality wethers and ewes were in fairly heavy supply with good light trade descriptions generally making a satisfactory

showing. On occasions fair numbers of good to prime heavy grades were included, but mostly the supply of this class of mutton was relatively light.

Prices Reach High Levels.

Early in the month when retail shops were closed supplies were limited and operations were confined principally to near country butchers. The market, however, was particularly strong and the cost of mutton reached high levels. Subsequently the market was cheaper, the decline being from 2s. to 3s. per head. Values remained steady until about mid-January, when rates advanced by from 1s. to 3s. per head. The strong tone of the market was not maintained and with operators endeavouring to purchase their requirements at prices which would conform with the maximum fixed wholesale prices, values showed a considerable decline by the end of the period and were from 4s. to 7s. per head below the prevailing high rates early in the month. Good to prime heavy and light wether mutton at times was worth from 7d. to 8d. per lb., but for the most part cost from 6¼d. to 7¼d. per lb. At the closing auctions, however, operators paid from 5d. to 6d. per lb. Prime heavy wethers sold to 48s. per head while many drafts realised from 42s. to 46s. each. Good trade wethers were disposed of at prices ranging from 27s. to 40s. per head. Some of the best heavy ewes on offer realised 40s. per head with several lots at prices ranging from 30s. to 38s. each. Mostly, however, rates ranged from 22s. to 28s. per head. Heavy and light ewe mutton cost up to 6¾d. per lb. but generally was obtained at 4½d. to 5½d. for heavy and 5d. to 6d. for light. At the final auctions, however, rates had eased to 4d. to 4½d. and 4¼d. to 4¾d. for heavy and light ewe mutton, respectively.

During the month an increase of 1d. per lb. in the maximum wholesale price of mutton was announced and rates for the various retail cuts were also increased by 1d. to 2d. per lb.

Fewer Lambs Available.

The pennings of lambs and suckers were substantially below the previous month's total, yardings amounting to 79,249 head, representing a decline of about 15,000. Very few prime light grades were included but satisfactory numbers of good heavy sorts were offered. A large proportion of the supply was of medium to good useful trade quality, plain descriptions at times also being numerous.

Lower Rates for Lamb.

The best rates of the previous month were not maintained due mainly to the restricted inquiry owing to closure of retail butchers' shops. Values fluctuated considerably throughout and during the early part of the month prices declined, a fall of from 1s. to 3s. per head occurring. Later, however, following the return to normal trading and re-opening of retail shops, demand improved and by mid-January the market had fully recovered. Subsequently when supplies increased appreciably, and wholesale operators endeavoured to buy in conformity with the maximum

wholesale limits, rates for all classes of lambs showed a substantial decline, ranging from 4s. to 7s. per head. Although during the previous month light lambs made to 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. and heavy 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb. the highest price ruling for January was 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. for light grades and 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. for heavy grades. Mostly, however, good heavy descriptions realised from 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 11d. and light sorts 10d. to 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per lb. but at the closing sales following on the sharp downward trend in values, operators purchased good heavy quality lambs at 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. to 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and lightweights at 9d. to 10d. per lb. In accordance with the increase in maximum wholesale and retail prices of mutton, the wholesale rate for all weights of lamb carcasses advanced 1d. per lb. with corresponding increases ranging from 1d. to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb. on the various retail cuts.

Some exceptionally good prices were obtained, good heavy lambs at times making from 50s. to 56s. per head, while sales at from 44s. to 50s. each were often made. Generally good quality lambs made from 32s. to 42s. per head, other grades being at correspondingly lower levels.

The supply of hoggets was again light and rates reached to 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per lb., but chiefly ranged from 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. to 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per lb., although at the final sales the cost had declined to 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per lb.

G. COLEMAN.

CATTLE.

Supplies Lighter.

During the month, 9,719 head of cattle was offered, of which 1,973 were auctioned in the store section. The closing of the retail butchers' shops had its effect on the number yarded, and during the first half of January, a total of only 2,360 head was penned for the four sales in this period. However, the offering of 3,225 head on 30th January was the largest for more than six months.

Quality generally was not up to the standard of the previous month, fair trade stock comprising a large proportion of the total number auctioned, whilst grown cattle were in relatively short supply.

While the retail butchers' shops were closed, operations by wholesale buyers were restricted and values generally declined. Prices improved following the termination of the dispute, while, as the result of no sales on the Australia Day holiday, a strong demand caused a further appreciation of values. Supplies were more plentiful after the holiday with a consequent reduction in rates.

Moderate Showing of Bullocks.

The moderate showing of bullocks was relieved at times by the appearance of some fine prime and heavy drafts. However, these were not plentiful, the bulk of the yarding comprising light and medium weights of fair to good trade standard.

Demand was restricted during the first half of the month and values declined to 55s. to 69s. The subsequent improvement resulted in prices rising to 70s. to 83s. An increase in supplies was the primary cause of rates subsequently falling to 60s. to 69s. per 100 lb. at closing.

Steers in Demand.

Steers were well represented at all sales and comprised chiefly light and medium weights of fair to good trade standard. Prime and weighty descriptions were rather scarce but keen competition prevailed for those available. As a result of the restricted demand early in January, rates declined to 55s. to 69s., but a week later had reached the high level of 71s. to 83s. Following an increase in the number available, values declined and at closing were 61s. to 70s. per 100 lb.

Heavy Cows Scarce.

Moderate numbers of cows were offered, consisting mainly of light and medium weights of only fair trade standard, good to prime and heavy descriptions being in short supply.

As with bullocks and steers, prices dropped to 52s. to 60s. during the first part of the month. Improved demand raised values a week later to 60s. to 67s. for heavy and 64s. to 70s. for light descriptions but rates were then reduced following increased supplies and at closing were 50s. to 56s. and 51s. to 60s. per 100 lb. for heavy and light types respectively.

Prime Heifers in Short Supply.

Heifers made a fair showing and comprised chiefly light and medium weights of fair to good trade standard, prime and heavy descriptions being in short supply.

Values followed the same trend as with other classes of stock, declining to 55s. to 65s. in the first part of January, rising to 64s. to 70s. a week later and then falling to 55s. to 63s. per 100 lb. at closing.

Vealers Dearer.

Supplies of vealers were irregular, and generally consisted of light and medium weights of fair to good quality. Prime and heavy descriptions were scarce at all auctions during the month.

Fluctuations in values of this class of cattle were not nearly as marked as with other types. Rates at opening were 63s. to 70s., and they increased gradually until 70s. to 76s. were obtained at the peak sales on 20th January. Prices then declined, and at closing sales were 63s. to 74s. per 100 lb.

D. MCGREGOR.

PIGS.

Increase in Numbers Yarded.

Sales were resumed at the Homebush Abattoir Pig Saleyards on Tuesday, 7th January, 1947, after the Christmas and New Year holiday period. Although at this stage no settlement had been reached in the industrial dispute amongst pig slaughtermen, agents decided to conduct sales and offer pigs that were yarded to those buyers who were in a position to operate. Supplies were limited, the total yardings at the sales held on the 7th, 14th and 21st of the month amounting to only 1,477 head. Following on the settlement of the dispute and resumption of work by pig slaughtermen, the number of pigs submitted at the closing auctions for the period showed a particularly sharp increase and was the largest for any one sale since February, 1946. During the period a total of 4,353 head of pigs was yarded of which 1,905 head was received by rail. This represented an increase of about 500 on last month's offering but was considerably below the total of 6,831 head available during the same month in 1946.

Good Demand for Baconers.

Baconers made a very satisfactory showing and, although in relatively light supply early in the period, comprised a fairly large proportion of the penning on each sale day. Numbers available at the final sales, however, were appreciably higher. Fairly large consignments of good trade heavy to extra heavy descriptions were received, the offerings of light to medium weights being only moderate. The effect of the industrial dispute was reflected in prices paid and the best rates ruling during the previous month were not obtained. Values, however, considering the uncertain position in regard to slaughtering, were fairly well maintained, and did not fall below the previous month's closing prices. Opening sales were firm for all classes and later, due to a much better inquiry, realisations showed some improvement. At the closing auctions the market was irregular, and, while at times values were fully maintained, the heavy supplies offering tended to promote a weaker tendency for most classes of baconers.

The limited numbers offering at opening auctions made from £4 12s. 6d. to £8 os. 6d. per head, equivalent to 8¾d. to 11d. per lb. on a dressed carcass basis. Later in the period when buyers operated more freely the cost of good light bacon carcasses ranged from 10¼d. to 11¾d., medium 10d. to 11½d., and heavy 10¼d. to 11½d. per lb.; on occasions, however, prices fell to 10d. and 9½d. per lb., respectively. Extra heavy grades made from 8¾d. to 11¼d. per lb. at the closing sale, but at times the best price secured was 10d. per lb. On a per head basis baconers realised to £8 17s. 6d. per head, while light descriptions sold from £4 9s. 6d. per head.

Limited Inquiry for Backfatters.

For the most part backfatters were in short supply, but some increase in numbers occurred at the end of the month. Fair to good trade light to medium weights were numerous, but the supply of good heavy grades was relatively light. Inquiry for most classes offering was limited and realisations were lower than the average of those ruling last month, but mostly a little better than the reduced rates obtained at the end of December. Light descriptions, estimated to weigh up to 350 lb., were worth from 6d. to 7¼d. per lb. and heavy grades over 350 lb., 5¾d. to 7¼d. per lb. Good quality backfatters were disposed of at up to £13 per head. Other classes sold at from £6 10s. od. per head, with boars at times reaching lower levels.

Porkers Cheaper.

During the early part of the month demand for pork was restricted, and only very few lots were offered, which were acquired mainly by store buyers. Later, however, supplies improved, but with a keener inquiry prices were a little higher, although not equal to the best rates ruling during the previous month. With the heavier yarding at the close of the period, values did not hold, and all descriptions were cheaper, although up to 14¼ per lb. was realised for good light pork as compared with 15¼d. in December. Light porkers at closing were worth from 10¼d. to 12½d. per lb., medium weights 11d. to 12d., and heavy 11d. to 11¾d. per lb. On a per head basis prices reached to £4 7s. 6d. per head.

Store buyers were particularly active, and, with very heavy supplies at the closing sales, were able to secure good useful stores at much lower levels than had ruled earlier.

G. COLEMAN.
