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SALES OF LIVESTOCK AT HOMEBUSH, SYDNEY.**December, 1946.****SHEEP.****Smaller Numbers Yarded.**

The number of sheep and lambs consigned to Homebush showed a further decline when a total of 211,278 head was yarded, or about 16,000 less than were penned during the previous month; the adverse seasonal conditions being experienced, having reduced the supply of fat sheep and lambs available for slaughtering.

More Sheep Available.

Although the aggregate pennings showed a reduction more grown sheep were penned than in November, yardings for the period amounting to 116,347 head. The general standard of quality showed little material improvement and although good useful light trade wethers and ewes made a satisfactory showing fair numbers of medium quality sheep were also offered. Supplies of good to prime heavy wethers and ewes were moderate and some particularly attractive consignments were received.

High Cost of Mutton.

Prices showed some variation throughout, and values reached higher levels than those prevailing last month. At opening sales, rates advanced, increases of from 1s. to 2s. per head being evident while a further advance of from 2s. to 3s. per head occurred subsequently. Demand, however, was not fully sustained and cheaper markets ruled during the latter part of the month, most classes of sheep showing a fall of from 2s. to 5s. per head; but closing auctions generally were marked by a very firm to dearer tendency. Good to prime heavy wethers made to 7¾d. per lb. and light 8d. per lb., but mostly were worth from 5¾ to 7d. and 6d. to 7¼d. per lb. respectively. Prime heavy wethers made to 49s. per head while many lots offered were disposed of at from 44s. to 46s. each. Generally, however, good trade wethers realised from 27s. to 39s. per head. Up to 38s. per head was paid for good heavy ewes but, for the most part, sales were effected at from 23s. to 33s. each for good to prime descriptions. Heavy ewe mutton cost to 6½d. per lb. and light to 7d. but chiefly was worth from 4½ to 6d. and 4¾ to 6½d. per lb. respectively. The shortage on occasions of good quality wethers stimulated demand for ewe mutton and contributed materially towards maintaining prices at existing high levels.

Reduced Supplies of Lambs.

Supplies of lambs continued to be light and showed a further decline on the previous months aggregate, a total of 94,931 head being available. Quality for the most part was fairly good and suited to trade requirements, although prime light descriptions were fairly scarce. Good to prime heavy grades made a satisfactory showing, some very attractive drafts being included.

Lambs Generally Dearer.

A particularly strong demand prevailed for the lighter supplies offering and during the early part of the month rates showed an improvement of from 3s. to 5s. per head. Later, however, a cheaper market ruled and prices declined by from 3s. to 6s., and more in some places; but by the end of the month values improved, and increases to from 2s. to 3s. per head occurring. Good to prime light descriptions made to 12¾d. and heavy 12½d. per lb. and reached as low as 9½d. and 10d. per lb. for heavy and light respectively. For the most part, however, good heavy grades were worth from 9¾d. to 11½d., and outstanding lots at 11¾d. to 12d. per lb. The better class of light lambs were obtained at 10½d. to 12d. per lb., with odd lots of prime making from 12¼d. to 12½d. per lb. Good to prime lambs sold to 52s. per head, while prices ranging from 46s. to 50s. were often realised; mostly, however, sales were effected at from 34s. to 44s. per head. Hoggets were scarce and up to 9¼d. per lb. was paid for prime lines but generally rates ranged from 7¾d. to 8¾d. per lb.

G. COLEMAN.

CATTLE.**Smaller Numbers Available.**

Despite the fact that there was one more sale day in December than in November, the yarding of 13,160 head, of which 2,558 head were auctioned in the store section, was approximately 1,000 less than the previous month.

Quality generally showed some improvement for medium to heavy weights, but lighter descriptions were not up to the standard of the previous month.

Bullocks Rather Scarce.

Although supplies of bullocks were rather light, some very fine prime and heavy drafts were offered, one pen realising £30 10s. per head on 9th December, 1946. However, the bulk of the yarding comprised light and medium weights of good trade to prime quality.

Opening sales were at higher rates than November's closing quotations and subsequently advanced to 62s. to 74s. The market then showed some irregularity, a generally easier tendency being noticeable, and at final auctions, realisations were 60s. to 68s. per 100 lb.

Good Market for Steers.

Prime heavy steers were in short supply, the yarding consisting chiefly of light and medium weights of good to prime quality.

Realisations at opening were in advance of those prevailing at the close of the previous month, and increased a week later to 66s. to 77s. Subsequent auctions, however, displayed an irregular although somewhat easier tendency, and at closing 60s. to 70s. per 100 lb. was being obtained.

Light Cows Sell Well.

Cows made a fairly good showing, and comprised mainly light and medium weights of fair to good trade standard. Some prime and heavy lots were available at times, many sales at more than £20 per head being noted.

As with all other classes, opening rates were higher than November's closing prices, and increased a week later to the highest for the period, heavy cows realising to 59s. to 64s., and light descriptions to 61s. to 68s. Subsequent sales, although somewhat irregular, were generally easier to cheaper, and at the close of the month values ranged from 53s. to 58s. for heavy lines and 57s. to 64s. per 100 lb. for light cows.

Prime Heifers in Demand.

Heifers were fairly well supplied and comprised mostly light and medium weights of fair to good trade standard, prime and weighty descriptions being rather scarce.

In common with all other classes, the higher opening rates advanced towards the middle of the month to 68s. to 74s. The irregularity previously mentioned was also apparent in this class, and closing quotations were 60s. to 67s. per 100 lb.

Prime Vealers Scarce.

Although vealers were fairly well represented, the bulk of the offering consisted of light and medium weights of fair to good trade standard, prime and heavy descriptions being in very short supply.

No doubt due to the prevailing high prices for good to prime vealers, the increase at opening was not so marked as with other classes. In mid-December 70s. to 78s. was being obtained, and following the easier tendency noticeable for the remainder of the month, rates at closing were 69s. to 75s. per 100 lb.

D. MCGREGOR.

PIGS.**Sharp Decline in Numbers.**

Supplies of pigs were considerably lighter, the number yarded showing a sharp decline. Owing to the intervention of the Christmas Holidays only three sales were held during the month, the last sale being on the 17th December, 1946. This factor in conjunction with the industrial dispute amongst pig slaughtermen reduced the numbers offered materially and pigs available during the period amounted to 3,915 head or 3,714 head below last month's aggregate. Rail arrivals accounted for 2,778. During December, 1945, yardings totalled 5,959 head.

Values of Baconers Irregular.

Satisfactory supplies of baconers were available at opening sales, but due to the incidence of the industrial dispute, numbers penned showed a marked decline at subsequent auctions. All grades of weight were submitted, good trade light to medium

weights comprising a fair proportion of the pennings with moderate numbers of good to prime, heavy to extra heavy sorts also included. Demand at the early auctions was strong and values of light to medium grades showed some improvement. Inquiry for the heavier pigs, however, was not so keen and an easier tendency generally was evident. At later sales the effect of the industrial dispute was apparent in prices paid, all classes of baconers being considerably cheaper, the fall being from 10s. to 20s. per head, and more in places. At the early sales light bacon made from 11½d. to 12¾d. per lb. but later was obtained at from 10½d. to 11¾d. per lb. Medium weight baconers were worth from 11½d. to 12½d. per lb. at early sales, but later eased to 10½d. to 11¾d. per lb. Good heavy baconers made to 12d. per lb. and extra heavy 11¾d. per lb., but values in common with the general decline, fell to 10¼d. to 11½d. and 8½d. to 10¾d. per lb. respectively. Some of the best quality extra heavy baconers made to £9 14s. 6d. per head, while light weights sold at from £4 16s. 6d. each.

Backfatters in Short Supply.

Backfatters for the most part were in relatively short supply and comprised chiefly light to medium weights of fair to good trade quality, very few prime heavy-weights being included. Boars were forward in fairly large numbers when compared with the aggregate pennings.

Values were well maintained at early sales and pigs estimated to weigh up to 350 lb. dressed made to 9¼d. and over 350 lb. to 9d. per lb. Later in the period prices were considerably lower when backfatters up to 350 lb. sold at 7½d. to 8¾d. and over 350 lb. at 7d. to 8d. per lb. At the closing auctions demand was very dull and the best rate obtained was 6¾d. per lb. Prime weighty backfatters realised to £16 os. 10d. per head, with other classes at relatively lower levels.

Strong Demand for Pork.

A strong demand prevailed for the moderate numbers of porkers yarded and values at times showed a further advance on those prevailing during November. The intervention of the Abattoir dispute, thus interfering with slaughterings, tended materially to reduce prices towards the close of the month's operations. Extra light and light-weight porkers made to 15¼d., medium to 15d. and heavy grades to 14¼d. per lb. while up to £5 3s. 6d. per head was realised. Values at the closing sales, however, were up to 14¾d. for light-weights, 13¾d. for medium and 12¾d. for heavy grades, while up to £4 19s. 6d. per head was paid.

Suitable store pigs made a fairly good showing and were in good demand at firm rates, operations at the final sales being confined principally to store buyers owing to the inability of the pork trade interests to operate.

G. COLEMAN.