

Bareville IFYE Delegate Describes Life "Down Under"

By: J. David Lapp, IFYE
In New Zealand

Editor's Note: David Lapp, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Lapp, Bareville R1, is on a six-month tour of New Zealand as a member of the International Farm Youth Exchange program of the national 4-H clubs. The following article is from a report which David sent to the local sponsors of the program. The concluding part of the report will be printed next week.

Well, in these last several weeks I've been moving around quite a bit. The strange thing about it, I move 100 miles and the climate is different and the problems that the farmers have are just as different.

Most of my stay so far has been in the South Island with the sheep farmers. They are an easy-going type of people that came out from Great Britain. One of their favorite expressions is "She'll be right" meaning "Don't worry, everything will be OK." I came to the conclusion that they are quite well to do because they can buy land at 100 to 200 dollars an acre. It is nothing to own a farm of 600 to 2000 acres that has been in the family for qu-

ite some time. On the farm I am now staying they have 600 acres. They say its just a small place and have 2200 sheep plus their lambs and 175 beef cattle.



DAVID LAPP

This last spring, which they had in August, September and October was a good year for them and their sheep lambed at 130%. They will be selling these lambs after Christmas at

the live weight of 55 to 65 lbs. This will be a dressed weight of 28 to 34 lbs., for which they will get paid the average of 13 cents per lb. dressed weight bringing the value of the spring lamb to about 5 dollars.

Since Britain is joining the common market the farmers have fears about their produce because they are afraid Britain won't take it. They are looking for other markets and would like to come to the United States, but at present the American sheep farmer don't allow it. The farmers down here feel that they could help the US farmer by providing lamb when the US farmer doesn't have any to sell. Since the spring down here is when we have fall they would be able to provide spring lamb all winter for us. This would provide lambs all year round for the housewife. They feel it would boost the price for the US farmer. They are also looking to Japan for a market but find they will have to educate the people how to prepare the lamb.

I said that's what they would have to do to the American housewife because she can rarely go to the store and get a cut of lamb, therefore they never have it and don't know how to prepare it properly. I stayed with one family that eats 52 wethers a year. That's one a week and I found it to

be very good. It is better and more tender than their beef. They fatten their beef on grass and not on grain. The lamb is fattened on milk and grass and therefore is quite tender. After the lambs are sold they will shear the mother sheep and get an average of 10 lbs. of wool per sheep and this gets sold at an auction after it has been graded and goes to the highest bidder. He exports it to make woolen products. This wool is worth 40 cents per pound which makes \$4.00 worth of wool per sheep per year. If they are lucky they can graze 5 sheep per acre so if you figure it out you get the return of \$50.00 per acre on sheep alone and there is only about two months of hard work involved — six weeks of lambing when the sheep have to be watched very close and two weeks of shearing.

The idea of shearing really appealed to me. I guess it is because there is a lot of money in it. The farmer pays a person, usually a young guy, 40c a sheep for shearing. A good person can shear as many as 200 a day. But you just can't think of the money. There is a lot of hard back-breaking work involved. I tried my hand at it, but I don't know what the sheep thought I was trying to do. I sure had to sweat to keep him lying flat while I chopped at the wool. I thought it looked easy but I think a little differently since I tried.

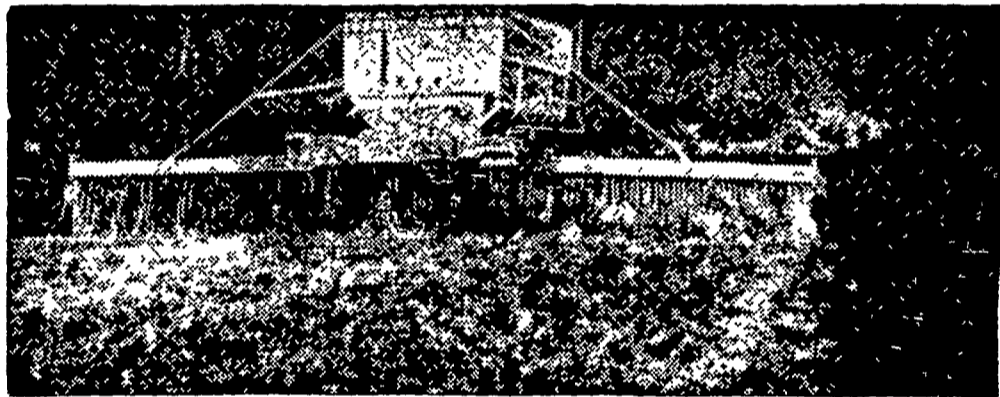
The rest of the year the sheep farmer devotes to a bit of

cropping, hay making and sports. Some of the farmers have wheat and they get as high as 80 to 100 bushels of wheat per acre and get \$1.50 per bushel. I didn't get any information on it as yet but I think it is a type of soft wheat and that explains why their bread isn't as good, because if I understand correctly the hard wheat makes the better bread. Their bread is quite hard and it comes to the house unwrapped with the mailman, so it gets tossed around quite a bit before the housewife gets it, therefore it is usually stale and hard as a rock.

The farmer also makes from 2000 to 5000 bales of hay a year. Sometimes it is alfalfa. At the place I'm staying now they are making clover and meadow hay. Their field is on top of the hill and takes about 30 minutes to get there with a tractor and when we do get there I'm afraid the tractor and baler will fall down to the bottom again, it is so steep. It isn't possible to tow a wagon behind the baler so they use a sled and put 8 to 10 bales on it, then push them off on a heap. My job was to go around in the truck and help gather these bales up and tie them on to the truck before they would fall off. This is a bit different than what I was used to back home on level ground, but found it to be great fun because there was plenty of help and we got about 2 loads away before it was time for a tea break or dinner.

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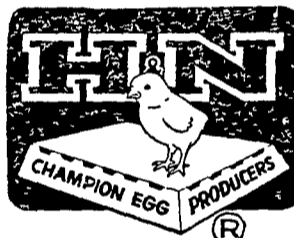
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