

# NZ - Record lamb prices after one million lambs died of cold

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**Record prices for prime lambs at southern stock sales are giving farmers something to smile about after last year's shocking season when up to a million lambs died in freezing conditions.**



A pen of about 20 Dorset Down ram lambs sold for \$223.50 each at a recent Charlton stock sale in Gore. The price was believed to be a record for the saleyards, PGG Wrightson Gore livestock manager Mark Cuttance said.

The prices reflected the quality of stock offered that day and it was an "exceptional" pen of lambs. The previous week, \$213 was achieved for a "nice pen of lambs", Mr Cuttance said. To the best of his knowledge, this season was the first time the \$200 mark had been broken at the Charlton sale.

The high prices reflected the shortage of lambs and supply and demand. There was expected to be increased local consumption with the influx of visitors to New Zealand for the Rugby World Cup, he said.

Snow, rain and wind hit much of Southland, South Otago and West Otago last September, claiming the lives of a million lambs, while the North Island was also affected by wet, cold weather during lambing.

Nationally, 25.11 million lambs were tailed last spring, 2.78 million fewer than the previous year, the biggest decline in 21 years, and due mostly to adverse weather. Whether the high prices would continue or not was "crystal ball stuff".

However, it had been a long time, for a lot of people, since they had had such good prices and, also, after such a bad lambing, getting some reward now was "pretty nice", Mr Cuttance said. The mood among sheep farmers was buoyant - "everyone's positive" - and people were starting to make reasonable money for what they were producing and were reinvesting into the industry, he said. Prime lamb prices broke through the \$200 mark at the Waiareka stock sale in Oamaru last month, while the top price at this week's sale for heavyweight lambs was \$214.

**Source:** [odt.co.nz](http://odt.co.nz)