

APPENDIX.

SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(L. J. POFF, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The farming year in this district commenced with a favourable autumn and winter, with mild conditions, resulting in all classes of stock being in very good condition with the opening of the spring season, and the prospects at this stage for a most successful farming year were very promising.

However, since December last drought conditions have prevailed, to date causing a serious reduction in the returns from dairy farms. Many dairy herds are already dry, and it is doubtful if heavy rainfall were now received that normal returns would be obtained in respect of those dairy herds still producing.

The hill-country farmers were the first affected by the drought conditions. Production commenced to fall in November, consequently these farmers will suffer a considerable reduction in the annual income.

Owing to the abnormally dry spring and summer months, it has not been possible to accurately gauge the effect on pastures of the reduction of top-dressing manures brought about by the rationing system which has been in operation during the last two farming years. It has been observed that up till November the returns of most settlers were showing an increase over the same period of the previous year. This position, however, may be somewhat due to the good condition in which stock wintered.

The total production of butterfat for the season will probably be less than that of last season. Wool should be about average, and also lambing percentages. Prices for wool, lamb, mutton, and beef were sufficient to show a fair margin of profit.

Lack of top-dressing manures and shortage of labour are seriously retarding land development to such an extent that inquiries for land have become extremely limited.

Crown tenants have for the most part continued to meet their annual financial commitments regularly, and requests for concessions by way of remissions or postponements of land charges have been much smaller than in past years.

AUCKLAND.

(K. M. GRAHAM, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

For the year under review a good late autumn and a mild winter were experienced throughout the district and stock came through into the spring in good condition. In some parts a cold wet spell occurred during the lambing season and there were some losses due to this, but on the whole both spring and early summer conditions were favourable to all classes of farming.

A prolonged dry spell after Christmas caused shortage of pasture over a fairly extensive area and also caused some anxiety over water-supply for stock on some farms throughout the district. However, if the autumn conditions are favourable, it is probable that, in spite of the dry weather and the falling-off in production, root crops and other winter feed will be sufficient to preclude any great loss over the year's working due to the dry weather.

Prices for all farm products have been satisfactory.

The effect of the rationing of top-dressing manures is becoming apparent on the lighter lands, where carrying-capacity and production will progressively be affected and suffer a set-back until a better supply of manure becomes available. Labour shortages and lack of sodium chlorate are beginning to affect the control of ragwort on dairy farms and on other country where sheep are not being carried. It is essential that the best possible attention be given to this pest if it is not once again to become out of control, as was experienced some years ago, especially before the gravity of the pest was fully realized by the farming community throughout the district.

Owing to the high cost and shortage of fencing-material, work under this heading has practically come to a standstill, and this will increasingly apply to the work of maintenance of farming improvements in general while the war lasts.

GISBORNE.

(H. L. PRIMROSE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past year has been of a very dry nature, the rainfall being about 30 in. below the average for the past sixty years. Nevertheless, owing to the rain being well spread over the whole year, there has not been a shortage of feed. The autumn and winter months were very mild, resulting in all stock wintering well.

There has been a greatly increased area put into cereal crops this year, with satisfactory results.

The lack of an adequate supply of top-dressing manures for the dairy farming industry particularly, is an unfortunate experience as, without this essential farming commodity, it is extremely difficult to maintain dairying pastures.

The opening of the Gisborne railway line in September last has already been a decided advantage in the transportation of stock to outside districts.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(F. R. BURNLEY, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Hawke's Bay has had quite a fair, average year. Generally speaking, the winter was milder and fairly cold with less rain than usual, but, on the whole, feed has been plentiful and stock have done well all the year.

In some parts the lambing was protracted, there was a large number of twins, and also a larger number than usual of dry ewes, but the lambing percentage was about the average.

The spring was dry, and adversely affected both the numbers and weights of lambs killed.