

The season's wool-clip has been quite up to the average, and prices, on appraisalment, have been quite satisfactory.

The scarcity of labour was probably the reason for the giving-up of dairying in a number of instances, and the turn over to sheep.

Another feature of the year's farming has been the increased area devoted to wheat and vegetable growing. It is difficult to assess the actual area, but it must be a fairly big increase on last year.

One feature of considerable national importance, and one which will no doubt be tackled in due course, is the deterioration of a lot of our back-country pastoral lands. Lack of the usual supply of manures and labour shortage here again seem to be the chief contributing causes. As such country reverts, so do the weeds and rabbits increase. Normal conditions may eventually rectify a lot of this reversion.

TARANAKI.

(A. F. WATERS, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The season 1942-43 has been favourable for farming operations in Taranaki. The lambing percentage was on a par with the previous season.

Prices for sheep remained steady, while cattle sales throughout the year have been brisk, with a consequent increase in prices.

Wool generally has not been quite so good as to colour, but otherwise has been about in the usual condition as to weight and quality, with perhaps less seed than usual.

Owing to shortage of suitable labour and restricted top-dressing, ragwort and blackberry appear to be more in evidence, and maintenance of fences and cleaning up generally is noticeably neglected.

Butterfat-production has been well maintained owing to summer rains keeping the pastures green. There has been a change back from cheese to butter owing to altered war conditions.

WELLINGTON.

(H. W. C. MACKINTOSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

In the northern portion of this district climatic conditions were reasonably favourable and the winter throughout was mild. There was a good growth of grass and turnips, and stock came through to the spring in very fair condition. The summer, however, has been changeable and farmers have experienced difficulty with grain and hay crops. Top-dressing has been carried out as far as quotas of manures will permit, but the shortage of manures may prove detrimental to pastures, on hill country especially.

In the Manawatu and Rangitikei areas similar conditions prevailed. A dry spell in December and January caused drying up of pastures in part of the district, but this was not particularly serious. This was followed by some heavy rains which benefited pastures but had a bad effect on grain crops, which were accordingly late in being harvested. Prospects for autumn grass are good.

In the Wairarapa area there was a mild winter and stock came through well, a sufficiency of winter feed having been saved. There was a touch of drought in the summer that had a slight effect upon production. Wool-clips have been satisfactory and in some cases increased weights were recorded. Cropping yields were good.

Crown tenants generally are doing their best to maintain areas on their farms which have been cleared of gorse and scrub under the Unemployment Schemes 4B, &c., but some of them are finding difficulty in obtaining labour. The schemes were of great assistance to those farmers who availed themselves of them in increasing their production. Another factor in the amelioration of farming conditions for tenants is the decisions of the Adjustment Commissions set up under the Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act. These have been the means, in a number of cases, of farmers becoming successful who would otherwise have gone under. Ragwort is being controlled on farms where it exists, both by spraying and the grazing of sheep where possible, and it is not now so much in evidence as it was some years ago.

NELSON.

(P. R. WILKINSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The winter was quite a mild one, and good weather has been experienced during spring and summer. All classes of farming should show increased returns of produce.

There has been little or no demand for land in this district and very few areas of Crown land have been opened for selection.

Crown tenants generally are meeting their annual charges in a satisfactory manner and the position of rental accounts is quite good.

MARLBOROUGH.

(G. I. MARTIN, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past season has been reasonably favourable. The winter was mild and spring growth came away early, but very dry conditions were experienced from early December to the middle of February over portion of the district. This caused some concern to graziers and those with late crops, but was beneficial for shearing and the harvesting of early crops. However, good rains were experienced towards the end of February, and a satisfactory autumn growth should now be assured.

Stock wintered well and lambing percentages and wool-clips were good on the lower country, but rather disappointing as regards run country. The season was favourable for most of the dairy-farmers.

Crops were not as good as had been anticipated and, presumably as a result of the mild winter, a fair amount of disease was evident in many areas of peas, wheat, barley, beans, and linen. Most small seeds yielded satisfactorily.

Shortage of sufficient labour is reflected in an increase in the rabbit pest in many localities.