

TAIRAWHITI MAORI LAND BOARD DISTRICT

A few small blocks have been brought under the Native land-settlement scheme during the past year.

The season, practically throughout the district, has been normal, and the rainfall in the northern and southern districts was on the whole fair. In the central area, however, drought conditions prevailed from August to April, and dairy returns suffered considerably, while run cattle from several stations had to be disposed of at unfavourable prices. In the autumn, however, the grass recovered rapidly, and it is expected that there will be sufficient food available everywhere during the coming winter.

Despite the lack of Maori man-power through the enlistments in the armed forces and the exodus of available classes required in the centres, the production has been more than maintained. Only a slight recurrence of facial eczema has been experienced, and it is hoped that prospects of a major outbreak have now passed. Many management difficulties have been overcome by the temporary amalgamation of properties.

In the southern portion of the district some areas have been found unsuitable for dairying, and the policy adopted of carrying out mixed farming and cropping has had beneficial results. Cropping produce for sale is new to the Tairāwhiti District, but this year contracts have been entered into with a canning firm for the supply of approximately 200 tons of potatoes and 20 tons of carrots, which will be dehydrated for the overseas services. A small venture with beans for the supply of seed for export has also been satisfactory.

The following table shows the present stock, &c., under the control of the Department:—

—				Dairy Cows.	Other Dairy Stock.	Sheep.	Run Cattle.	Bales of Wool.
Native Department	..	..	..	3,642	2,547	52,309	4,570	1,077
Native Trust	..	..	..	..	..	37,660	4,205	753
Maori Land Board	..	..	..	..	..	15,817	2,233	591
Totals	..	..	..	3,642	2,547	105,786	11,008	2,421

The benefits experienced in this district on the completion of the railway-line between Wairoa and Gisborne are reflected in the increased prices obtained for live-stock railled from the Mahia development scheme, Hercheretau station, and other properties in this area, and the reduction in freights on manures and other farming requirements as compared with road transport. While the restrictions on the supply of fertilizers are felt heavily throughout the district, the harrowing of pastures has been carried on with beneficial results.

Native Housing.—Building activities throughout the district have been curtailed, as all available skilled labour has been concentrated on defence work, but it is hoped that the Maori carpenters, who have been carefully trained and are now experienced, will not be lost to the Native housing scheme. It is gratifying to note that the new employers are well satisfied with their services.

Only seven houses were erected and one purchased during the year, but the titles for many sites have been cleared by appropriate Court order, and Natives are being encouraged to accumulate deposits in anticipation of the time when further progress can be made.

There is no doubt that the policy of providing better housing conditions for the Maoris has resulted in a marked improvement not only in the health of the people, but in their living conditions generally, and the care bestowed on their homes and gardens in almost all cases gives cause not only for satisfaction, but encouragement to continue the good work. It is pleasing also to report the excellent position of the housing accounts; not only is interest being met, but substantial reductions are being made in the loans by principal repayments. Assignments of pension moneys, together with rents, form the greater part of the receipts, and these accounts are an example of what can be accomplished by regular monthly payments.

AOTEA MAORI LAND BOARD DISTRICT

The shortage of man-power and materials has not permitted any increase in development operations in this district. In several instances the younger farmers are serving with the armed forces, and every endeavour is being made by wives and parents to maintain the properties in full production.

The prolonged period of dry weather which commenced in the early summer is reflected in the marked decrease in butterfat-production, and although an abundant rainfall was experienced in the latter part of February and early March, this was too late to retrieve the position.

In common with individual Natives outside the development schemes, the settlers in this district have made a splendid response to the appeal for an increased production of potatoes as part of the Maori war effort. At the time of writing, the crops are being harvested for marketing, but production figures are not available. Many fine crops have been noted on various farms in the district.

Considerable interest was aroused by the nomination of two units for the Ahuwhenua Trophy, this being the first occasion on which entries have been made from the Aotea District. Although the entrants did not fill the prize-winning places, their participation