

1943.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY.

SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS

(ANNUAL REPORT ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 12th April, 1943.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit herewith the annual report on the settlement of Crown lands for the year ended 31st March, 1943, together with particulars of operations under the Small Farms Act, 1932–33, and the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929.

I have &c.,

R. G. MACMORRAN,

Under-Secretary.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

REPORT.

GENERAL REVIEW.

As mentioned in last year's report, the general operations of the Department are being considerably restricted owing to war conditions. As much work as possible has been carried out in the direction of preparing Crown-owned areas for future settlement by returned servicemen, but these operations have been affected by the shortage of essential materials and the lack of available labour.

The reports received from the various districts indicate that settlers generally have had a satisfactory year. In the northern portion of the North Island, however, drought conditions during the summer caused a falling off in production.

Crown tenants, like other sections of the farming community, are feeling the effects of the shortage of phosphatic fertilizers, while, owing to the difficulty in obtaining suitable labour, noxious weeds are spreading and rabbits are showing an increase, particularly in the southern districts.

With production reaching a satisfactory level and with good prices for farm products, the majority of the tenants have been able to meet their rental commitments; but, on account of snow losses in the previous year, it has been necessary to grant relief by way of remission of rent to a number of holders of high-country runs in the South Island.

Extracts from reports of Commissioners of Crown Lands, dealing generally with settlement conditions in the various districts, are included in an Appendix to this report.

LEGISLATION.

By section 21 of the Statutes Amendment Act, 1942, the membership of the Land Settlement Board was increased by the appointment of representatives of the State Advances Corporation and the New Zealand Returned Services' Association.

The Reserves and other Lands Disposal Act, 1942, contains nineteen sections dealing with Crown lands, reserves, endowments, and other lands. One section of this Act makes special provisions with respect to the gift of land to the Crown by the late Sir Robert Anderson, of Invercargill, for the settlement of discharged servicemen, and establishes the Anderson Trust Board.

LAND TRANSACTIONS.

During the year, 291,613 acres were taken up on various tenures, the number of selectors being 649 under all headings. These figures include 347 sections, comprising altogether an area of 42,337 acres, taken up under temporary miscellaneous leases and licenses, so that the selections on permanent tenures number 302 sections, covering a total area of 249,276 acres. Only a relatively small proportion of this land comprised entirely new selections. Many of the selections consisted of additions to existing holdings, while the area involved included a number of sections which had reverted to the Crown on account of forfeiture or surrender of leases. The land taken up also included some pastoral runs which had been surrendered and reselected pursuant to section 277 of the Land Act.

At 31st March the tenants on the books of the Department numbered 35,430 occupying a total area of approximately 17,545,657 acres.

POSTPONEMENTS, REMISSIONS, AND ARREARS OF RENT AND INTEREST.

Rents and interest the payment of which remained postponed at 31st March amounted to £20,616. Arrears of rent and interest at the 31st March (including arrears in respect of the current half-yearly charge) totalled £176,792, while remissions for the year totalled £27,858.

LAND DEVELOPMENT.

SMALL FARMS ACT, 1932-33, AND LAND LAWS AMENDMENT ACT, 1929.

General.

During the year ended 31st March, 1943, the major operations of the Land Settlement Board were confined more to the maintenance and farming of the blocks under their control than to the further development of new country or the completion of new improvements. The supply position, which earlier forced a decision to curtail new development work has not improved to any extent, and consequently operations must be confined to those for which material and labour are available. In view of this shortage of material and labour, it has not been possible on some properties to take full advantage of previous capital expenditure on improvements.

Although new development work has been curtailed to a minimum, it is neither wise nor, in some cases, possible to cease new work entirely. An instance of the need to continue with a restricted programme is apparent on partly-developed blocks, where it is inadvisable to break up recently-established permanent pastures for the annual swede crop, and it is far better to cultivate new country, which, following the crop, must be sown to permanent pasture.

In addition to the areas that have already been purchased for subdivision for the settlement of ex-servicemen, there are many blocks which have been developed which could be made available for settlement if supplies in the way of fertilizer, fencing-wire, piping, and building-materials were available.

Owing to the necessity for the early preparation of this report it has not been possible to include financial figures and other statistical data showing the position of the various blocks as at 31st March, 1943. Comprehensive schedules giving particulars as to expenditure, area under development, stock carried, and other details in respect of each block as at 31st March, 1942, were published in last year's annual report. The general position in respect to operations on the development blocks in the various districts is as follows:—

Control: Superintendent of Land Development, Auckland.—The lands under development in this district comprise fifteen blocks totalling 73,500 acres. One small block of partly-improved dairy land was purchased during the year. Operations were again confined to those for which material and labour were available.

Farming returns showed a steady increase over those for the previous year, mainly due to the fact that pastures sown previously were approaching maturity.

Further endeavours were made to improve the quality of stock being run by purchasing good foundation breeding-ewes and rams, breeding-cows and bulls, and already this policy is bearing fruit in increased wool returns and better prices for fat stock.

On some of these areas which have only been developed in the last few years, grazing has been confined solely to cattle, but, with consolidation and the establishment of a better sole of grass, arrangements were made to establish limited ewe flocks.

A particularly dry summer was experienced north of Auckland, and this, coupled with the general difficulty attending the supply of good natural water in this district, affected production.

In the Rotorua and Bay of Plenty districts, where the rains were ample, the effect of the reduced rate of top-dressing has not become apparent, and it has been possible, by careful planning, to conserve manure-supplies. The labour available from the National Service Department's camp on the Mihi Block has been of much assistance, but here again shortage of material has handicapped progress.

On the Galatea Estate favourable weather conditions promoted good pasture growth, and the dairy and station returns were maintained at a satisfactory level.

One new dairy herd was established, the total number of cows milked being 1,130 in fifteen herds.

No new development work was carried out during the year, work being confined to farming operations, including the provision of swedes, hay, top-dressing, and drain and fence maintenance.

At the end of the year a small party of defaulters were moved from Strathmore to undertake building maintenance, road and culvert repairs, and the prevention of river erosion.

An outbreak of facial eczema was recently reported from this area, but the extent of the outbreak is not yet known.

Control: Superintendent of Land Development, Te Kuiti.—The blocks under the Superintendent's control number thirty-seven, while the area remaining after allowing for certain alienations and some minor increases is approximately 66,700 acres.

With the exception of the blocks at Ohakune and Raetihi, the control of fern and ragwort has again been exacting, but, generally speaking, the Supervisors and Farm-managers have done excellent work in this respect.

The curtailment of supplies of superphosphate has not yet shown any need to reduce the numbers of stock being carried. Where (as is the case on most of the blocks in this district) hand top-dressing of hill country has to be resorted to, it is questionable whether a shortage of competent men to carry out this work will not be a greater factor in the reduction of manure sown than will be the allocation.

The number of employees engaged on the thirty-seven blocks has been greatly reduced during the year, and those now employed total only one hundred and fifty.

Dairy returns from the sixteen herds have remained over all consistent with those of last season, while lambing and calving percentages in the run stock have remained about the same.

While it has still been necessary to purchase wethers for control work, the past year has seen the blocks, for the first time, self-supporting in cattle.

So far as can be seen, the swede crops show every promise of providing sufficient feed for the coming winter, while an ample supply of hay and ensilage exists on most of the blocks.

It is not yet possible to give final weights of wool for the past year as, owing to difficulties of transport and handling by the brokers, a considerable amount has yet to go forward for appraisal.

Despite a curtailment of manure, the improvement to pastures with age has allowed for a further increase in stock this season, and a careful examination of the position has warranted a further extension of the breeding flocks and herds.

Since the beginning of the war the numbers of ewes and breeding-cows have been doubled, with the result that this winter forty thousand ewes and three thousand run cows will be carried, in addition to dairy herds and dry stock needed for control.

Control: Commissioner of Crown Lands, North Auckland.—Work on Batten's Block, of 1,524 acres, which is the only area under development in this district, has had to be curtailed owing to the prevailing supply position. The block is an abandoned Crown security.

Control: Commissioner of Crown Lands, New Plymouth.—Three abandoned Crown securities, containing 1,388 acres, are the only development areas under the control of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, New Plymouth, and they are being held and farmed with a view to future disposal.

The past year has proved somewhat better than the previous year owing to slightly improved weather conditions. The lack of adequate top-dressing is becoming evident in the pastures, but on the dairying area a considerable dressing of lime has been applied with beneficial results. The scourge of contagious abortion in the dairy herd has been somewhat allayed, resulting in an increase in butterfat returns as compared with the previous season. Labour shortage has been acute, thus making it impossible to do any work other than general farm husbandry.

Control: Commissioner of Crown Lands, Napier.—Four areas in this district are under development—Kakariki, Kaheka, Waihou, and Parinui Blocks, some 31,798 acres, and the Ahuriri Lagoon, of 7,753 acres.

The season has been a good average one, but owing to labour shortage and the difficulty of obtaining sufficient supplies of top-dressing fresh development work could not be undertaken, and the operations have been mostly confined to maintenance of present pastures.

On the areas not top-dressed, scrub reversion is occurring, and must continue to do so owing to the shortage of labour with which to deal with this problem.

So far as the Ahuriri Lagoon is concerned, development operations have been limited by shortage of labour and the necessity to conserve manure-supplies. Some 75 acres previously in crop have been laid down in permanent pasture. Grass has been harrowed and top-dressed, and crops of field pumpkins and mangels have been planted. A trial is being made of growing blue lupins for seed with the idea of using this plant as a soiling crop. Arrangements have also been made for the supply of a small amount of sweet blue lupin seed, which it is hoped will be developed into a satisfactory feeding-crop.

The lucerne stands have provided a good supply of ensilage and hay, and the reserve of feed is very satisfactory. New ground has been broken up for barley crops.

The policy of shutting up areas of untreated land to seed down has been continued, and there has consequently been a good increase of natural cover of aster and melilot, which has very greatly reduced run-off and also greatly restricted the necessity for pumping on the southern area. An untreated area of approximately 500 acres at the northern end has been allowed to seed down, and there has been a very satisfactory increase in the growth of natural cover.

Trouble has been experienced with weed growth in the drains, which has at times seriously affected pumping operations, and it has necessitated the provision of further weed-traps.

The yield of asparagus from a 2½-acre section has shown a satisfactory increase, and there will be a light cutting from an additional five acres next season.

Control: Commissioner of Crown Lands, Gisborne.—The Te Wera Estate, of 9,922 acres, is the only development block under the control of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Gisborne. It was acquired in 1927, since which date it has been developed and run as a station. Since acquisition about 1,900 acres of bush have been felled and grassed. The stock carried thereon comprise thirteen thousand sheep and two thousand head of cattle. The use of cobaltized salt over the past few years has shown a very beneficial effect on the sheep carried. The surplus stock are keenly sort after by the Waikato buyers. Unfortunately, the top-dressing programme has been curtailed owing to the short supplies of manure available. Labour shortage is also making it difficult to maintain the stock in its present high standard. A standard flock is carried, and both the progeny and the class of wool derived therefrom is evidence of the advisability of purchasing good rams from outside districts.

Control: Commissioner of Crown Lands, Wellington.—In this district experimental development has been undertaken on an area of 100 acres of Crown land at Tangimoana.

The area is still holding the pastures, and increased numbers of stock are being carried this year. During the present season the ewes and lambs did not do as well as last year, and, although the percentage of lambs born was greater, a lesser number of "fats" has been sold up to the present. At time of writing, appearances do not indicate that 100 per cent. will be sold fat. Mortality in the ewes was extraordinarily high after lambing. For next season younger ewes have been secured and better results will be looked for.

Control: Commissioner of Crown Lands, Blenheim.—Two properties are under the control of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Blenheim, the first being a fully-developed orchard property of 68 acres and the other the Molesworth-Tarndale Station, containing 239,500 acres.

The Torode's Estate Orchard is fully developed, and operations were confined to seasonal work.

Although dry conditions between December and February last restricted the growth of the later varieties of fruit, good rains in the latter part of February rectified the position, and present indications are that about nine thousand cases should be produced. This will be an increase of about one thousand cases on the previous season's yield.

The Molesworth-Tarndale Station continues to show definite, although slow, signs of improvement under the Department's policy of restricting grazing to cattle and continuing with the eradication of rabbits.

The following report has been received from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in connection with the Molesworth-Tarndale Station:—

"There are two types of soil: the grey-brown loams and the yellow-brown, so named because of the colour of the subsoil. The grey-brown loams are located in the low-rainfall belt and cover the lower slopes of the Awatere Valley from Upeot to near the head of the valley, and extend down the Acheron for about eight miles. The width of the belt is about seven miles. The vegetation is mainly tussock-grassland, with hard tussock dominant.

"The yellow-brown loams, located in a higher-rainfall belt, occur in the high country of the Awatere and Acheron Valleys, and occupy practically all of the Tarndale Run. The tussock-grassland shows a higher proportion of silver tussock and snow-grass. On the yellow-brown loams soil erosion is not serious except at high altitudes, where scree slopes occur. The tussock cover is still good in the main, though on some slopes, especially sunny faces, there is a greater or less amount of depletion. At higher altitudes the scree slopes in places have extended downwards at the expense of the tussock cover. There is evidence of improvement in the vegetative cover between tussocks since the area was shut up.

"Serious depletion and erosion has taken place on the grey-brown loams, and it is on this type of soil especially that there is need to concentrate attention for experimental work to control and prevent erosion and to re-establish a good vegetative cover. On the grey-brown loams three kinds of soil loss may be seen: (1) on scree slopes containing a good deal of soil and subsoil; (2) on scree slopes containing much subsoil; (3) on bare slopes, exposing much hard rock and loose scree without soil and subsoil.

"Type 3 is located on the higher levels of the grey-brown soils, carries little vegetation of moment, and presents a very difficult problem for regeneration of a cover. Observational work is desirable, but for the present may be disregarded as far as major experiments are concerned. Types 1 and 2 are found almost exclusively on sunny slopes, and it is to these that experimental work should be at first confined. No. 1 shows a good growth of sorrel, whereas No. 2 is practically all now carrying little else but scab-weed, with some incoming of tussock on the mats of scab-weed.

"An area was selected embracing types 1 and 2, on a slope 30 chains to 40 chains south-west of Molesworth Homestead, where it is proposed to conduct an experiment in conjunction with the Department of Lands and Survey. A detailed survey of this area will be made, and plots established for the various trials in regeneration. A rabbit-proof fence will be necessary, so that trials with and without rabbit-interference can be made. A full scheme will be prepared if it is found possible to proceed with the suggested experiments.

"The river-flats visited were in very good condition, and could carry more cattle without danger to the depleted areas. On the shadier slopes above the valley bottoms there is evidence of improvement since the Molesworth Run was shut up. Especially noticeable was the increase of blue-grass, which is coming in between the tussocks, and in places already making a fairly close cover where the hard and silver tussocks are dead or decadent."

Control: Commissioner of Crown Lands, Nelson.—Maintenance work only is being continued on the two blocks—Pakihi and Organ's—in this district. The blocks together contain 2,292 acres.

Last year it was decided to cease development on the Pakihi Block. The whole area is utilized for raising fat cattle, which can all be absorbed by the local market. Some small areas of grazing-land were made available to the public and were temporarily leased for three years.

Control: Commissioner of Crown Lands, Canterbury.—Four blocks, containing 12,447 acres, are being farmed or developed under the Small Farms Act, and six blocks, containing 4,041 acres, under the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929. A small area of 148 acres was added to one of the latter blocks during the year.

Weather conditions throughout the year have been generally favourable. The winter, though mild, was rather dry, and feed was short on some blocks in the early spring. Since then rainfall has been above normal and growth has been well maintained. Rape has grown well, and turnip crops are promising.

Little development has been undertaken during the year owing to the shortage of labour, and activities have been confined mainly to seasonal operations. All lambs were fattened, and wool revenue shows an upward tendency on most blocks. Ewe replacements bred on the blocks were available this year and purchases were restricted to a minimum. On the lighter plains country Romney rams are this year being replaced with Southdowns.

Wheat yields on the lighter land were disappointing, but were satisfactory on the heavier land. An area of approximately 200 acres is in view for sowing in the coming autumn.

Grass sown last year on the heavier land is well established and stock numbers have increased.

Control: Commissioner of Crown Lands, Dunedin.—In the Otago District the Papanui Block, of 1,082 acres, is being developed under the small Farms Act, and the Arelif Block, of 4,804 acres, under the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929.

A mild winter was followed by a dry cold spring, and the summer has been very broken with many windy spells. A heavy snowstorm was experienced at the commencement of lambing, which greatly reduced lambing percentages throughout the province. Although stock wintered well, the changeable spring and early summer weather had the effect of keeping lambs back, and it has been a slow fattening season. However, given favourable weather in the autumn, the returns from fat lambs should be satisfactory.

Owing to shortage of labour, only a small amount of development work has been carried out on Papanui Settlement during the year. The ewe flock has been considerably increased, and a record number of cattle were carried through the summer.

On the Arelif Block the development work consists of the grassing of large areas previously eaten out and overrun with brown-top and couch.

Control: Commissioner of Crown Lands, Invercargill.—The Spurhead Block, of 2,213 acres, and the Anderson Gift Block, of 600 acres, both subject to the Small Farms Act, are under the control of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Invercargill.

On the whole the past season has been a favourable one, although a wet spring delayed sowings, particularly wheat, swedes, and turnips. All classes of crops and stock have done well.

On the Spurhead Block the outstanding feature of the year's operations was the sowing of 386 acres of linen flax as a direct war effort. This large undertaking turned out more successful than was anticipated, and it appears that very little, if any, of the crop will be rejected for fibre.

The Anderson Block, donated by the late Sir Robert Anderson to the Crown, is situated five miles west of Dipton. Possession was taken on the 16th April, 1942, when the block was immediately stocked up, 1,157 breeding-ewes being wintered. The development of this block can be regarded as advanced, but it is obvious from experience to date that further drainage is essential.

Individual Tenants under the Small Farms Act.

The greater majority of the individual tenants established under the Small Farms Act, 1932–33, are located in the North Auckland and Auckland Land Districts and occupy self-supporting dairy units. The following particulars are supplied relative to these areas:—

North Auckland.—The serious drought conditions have again proved the soundness of the past policy of reticulation of the majority of the properties with adequate piping and troughs. Further maintenance and improvement work has had to be carried out to two large water schemes in the Dargaville district. The holdings served by the two schemes concerned are particularly susceptible to drought conditions and lack of water.

The rationing of manure is also beginning to affect production and also the maintenance of pasture. Wherever possible, however, lime is being applied in larger quantities. The shortage of manure, coupled with the scarcity of labour, has meant that the bringing-in of further areas on some of the farms will have to be delayed until circumstances improve.

The majority of the holdings, however, have sufficient areas developed thereon to allow the holding concerned to be farmed as an economic unit in the meantime.

Numbers of settlers are with the armed forces, but, generally speaking, the settler's family has been able to carry on with the assistance of such outside labour as may be available.

Auckland.—Up till the present time the effect of the top-dressing manure shortage has not been very apparent, but from now on a deterioration must take place. A good rainfall was experienced until the beginning of January, which was very dry and caused pastures to dry up somewhat, but rains in the latter part of February have brought an improvement, and the stock should face the winter well.

Settlers generally have been alive to the necessity for growing crops and saving hay, and for destroying ragwort, which is again becoming a menace, as no sodium chlorate is available, and there is no extra labour available for cutting the weed.

Speaking generally, the settlers have maintained their position, in spite of the special difficulties facing the farming community to-day, but it appears inevitable that progress will be slower until conditions are normal again.

ADVANCES MADE TO CROWN TENANTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND STOCKING OF THEIR HOLDINGS.

Amounts advanced for the year ended 31st March, 1943:—

	£
Improvements	2,303
Stock	701
Number of advances made	39

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT ACT, 1915.

The following particulars are supplied pursuant to section 14 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915:—

TOTAL AREA PROCLAIMED SINCE INCEPTION OF THE SCHEME.

Class of Land.	Area (Acres).
Ordinary Crown lands	1,048,361
Land for settlements land	405,952
Cheviot Estate land	3,356
	1,457,669

Proclamations have been issued revoking the setting-apart of 257,936 acres of Crown land and 108,409 acres of land for settlements land.

From the inception of the soldier-settlement scheme in 1915 the total applications received number 15,181 and the allotments made number 4,112, covering a total area of 1,446,067 acres.

The Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account was abolished by section 6 of the Finance Act, 1937.

Provision for the settlement of discharged servicemen returned from the present war was made in the Small Farms Amendment Act, 1940.

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.

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.

WESTLAND.

(B. KING, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past farming season has been characterized by protracted periods of mild weather accompanied by exceptionally heavy rainfall. As a result, pastures have produced a heavy growth of lush vegetation and stock have kept in good condition throughout, though butterfat-production has suffered in quantity.

Lambing percentages have been good and losses small, fat-stock prices have been maintained, and the farming community must be accounted as having had a good year.

The chief drawback to the season has been occasioned by the exceptional number of floods, which have caused widespread damage to the farming-lands on river-flats, which are characteristic of this district. Many streams have opened up new channels and renewed old channels which have not carried water for many years.

The lessening of returns from pastoral-run country occasioned by the spread of deer and goats continues. Before long this menace will become an acute problem, particularly for South Westland settlers.

CANTERBURY.

(N. C. KENSINGTON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past year can be regarded as a good average year in this district as far as prices and returns are concerned. There have, as usual, been minor difficulties encountered in the different parts, but no serious setbacks have been reported.

The ordinary Crown lands administered in this district comprise largely pastoral areas, and although on some small grazing-runs a certain amount of cultivation is undertaken for winter feeding, there is little commercial cropping, this phase of farming being largely carried out on the numerous areas purchased under the Land for Settlements Act. The runholder and the pastoralist generally have experienced a good year, although in some cases the wool-clip has been lighter. No serious snow losses have taken place and there has been a good average lambing. The question of keeping rabbits under check is one that is causing anxiety, as in some parts an increase has been reported.

The lessees on settlement lands have enjoyed a good average year so far as prices and yields are concerned, with the exception of small seeds. These, together with grass seeds, are not in demand, and revenue from this source will be restricted. Good average wheat yields have been reported, and at the prices obtained should show good margins of profit. Lambing has been good, but delay in fattening has been experienced on account of the prolific growth of pasture. North-west winds have had a drying effect on the light Mid-Canterbury lands and rape has been ripening early, but the root crops give promise of a good supply of winter feed.

The harvesting weather has been somewhat broken, which has delayed operations, but generally has been satisfactory.

OTAGO.

(W. E. SHAW, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Taken as a whole, the year has been a favourable one. The winter was mild and no unusually heavy snowfalls were experienced on the high country, while the lower country was hardly affected. Unfortunately, late snows on the high country were against good lambing percentages, and a later fall at shearing-time caused losses, but in some ways this proved a blessing in disguise, as the hill-country pastures have since shown to better advantage than for many years. Stock prices have been satisfactory. On the high country the wool-clip generally has been lighter than usual owing to the very dry early spring, while the fine-wool grower has received a somewhat better return than last season.

The cereal crops have done well, and farmers in most districts have had the assistance of the military authorities in harvesting operations.

The spread of rabbits is assuming alarming proportions, and although high prices ruled for good skins, it has been difficult to obtain the services of good rabbiters.

Sweetbrier is showing a serious tendency to spread, but with the present shortage of labour it would seem that any appreciable attention to the matter will require to be held over until after the war.

SOUTHLAND.

(T. GAGNEY, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Beyond the fact that winter weather conditions prevailed well into the spring, there is little unusual to report in respect of the climatic conditions experienced in Southland throughout the year, and normal production should be substantially maintained.

Any reduction in the output of dairy-farms as a result of unfavourable spring conditions should be overtaken with the more favourable weather prevailing towards the close of the period.

High-country pastoralists have experienced another good season, the runs are well clothed in pasture, and no snowfalls of any account have been experienced since the heavy fall of 1939.

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