

twelve years, thereby giving to each of the 130-odd families a freehold home. No mortgagor was in arrears with his interest at 31st March, 1944:—

	1942.		1943.		1944.	
	Ordinary.	Special.	Ordinary.	Special.	Ordinary.	Special.
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Annual receipts	5,794	2,162	3,349	1,446	3,773	1,709
Less interest charges ..	3,583	337	1,375	432	1,272	480
Surplus receipts to reduce principal	2,211	1,825	1,974	1,014	2,501	1,229
Principal owing	25,594	9,482	29,527	11,218	28,358	11,350
Number of mortgagors ..	84	44	78	49	80	52

Aotea Maori Land Board District

In common with other parts of the North Island, this district has experienced unfavourable weather conditions—the second in succession—which are reflected in a general fall in production. The advent of spring was later than usual after a prolonged period of wet and cold weather. There was little growth until late October or November, when there was a change to hot weather with constant winds causing the usual flush feed of the summer to run straight up to seed. It is only since the commencement of the early autumn showers that there was any sign of recovery in the pastures. In most cases abundant supplies of hay were saved for winter feed, but on present indications root crops will not be up to standard.

Pastures generally are now showing deterioration as the result of inadequate top-dressing for several years in succession, and in some instances it has become necessary to reduce the carrying-capacity of the properties. Dairy stock at the commencement of the season was not in as good condition as would have been the case if climatic conditions had been more favourable, and the aggregate butterfat-production of approximately 300,000 lb. shows a fall of 8 per cent.

Two further dairy-settlers were commenced at Tokaanu, making a total there of four, and it is hoped to commence milking on four or five other properties in this locality during the coming season. The selected settlers are showing considerable enthusiasm in their new venture.

One farmer in the Kai Iwi district who, two or three years ago, commenced a small Southdown stud flock was able this year to dispose of sixteen rams of his own breeding at satisfactory prices. The rams came forward in good condition and compared favourably with similar sheep sold by local breeders who had had many years of experience at this specialized branch of farming.

Another settler at Reuren successfully harvested a crop of wheat.

During the year a readjustment was made of the boundaries of several of the sections at Ranana. This should result in more compact holdings with an increased carrying-capacity and greater chance of economic success. As a result, it is anticipated that during the coming season the aggregate number of cows milked at Ranana will be increased.

For the second time an entry was made from this district in the Ahuwhenua Trophy competition, the entrant being placed eighth.

There has again been little new development work on the general areas, and progress in this direction cannot be made until more labour is available and fertilizer can be obtained to maintain any new areas brought into production. Considerable difficulty is experienced in obtaining the services of competent shepherds, stockmen, and teamsters.

The rehabilitation of Maori ex-servicemen, in so far as their settlement on the land is concerned, will in practice be found to fall upon this Department as the agent of the Rehabilitation Board, and in this district, with the large areas available for settlement in the Taumarunui-Tokaanu area in particular, the needs of the local men can be fully met.

Native Housing.—Although the housing activities in this district have necessarily been restricted owing to prevailing conditions, the continued use of Maori labour under the direction of “key” carpenters has been justified by the results obtained. It has been possible, by the utilization of materials from buildings purchased for removal and good second-hand materials obtained from other sources, to keep the available labour fully employed, with the result that fourteen new houses were built, nine renovated, and in addition a number of farm buildings were erected.

A survey was recently made of the housing-conditions of eighty-six established and prospective settlers in this district. This revealed that in the majority of instances the housing-accommodation is satisfactory, and for the remainder, five are in course of erection or renovation, eight have been authorized by the Board of Native Affairs, and six will receive consideration as early as practicable.