

APPENDIX

SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS

NORTH AUCKLAND

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

The past farming year has proved to be a notable one, due chiefly to a prolonged dry period during spring to about mid-summer threatening a serious fall in butterfat-production. Fortunately, however, warm rains which were experienced near the end of the summer and continued throughout the autumn proved beneficial to pastures, bringing about a good recovery in butterfat-production, with the result that it can be reasonably anticipated that farming returns generally for the year will prove equally as good as was obtained for the preceding farming year. Larger quantities of hay have been stacked, and with the generally favourable state of pastures, stock are entering the winter in good condition.

Lack of man-power is now having a detrimental effect on the general maintenance of farms. Drains are not being cleaned, fences in many cases lack proper maintenance, and noxious weeds are not being controlled. This is a feature which will prove expensive to remedy and will tend to create a fall in production if not given early attention.

Wise and proper provision for replacement of cull cows by the serving of the best heifer calves is also a matter which is not receiving the attention it deserves.

Wool-production and lambing percentages should prove to be about average, and prices for wool, lamb, mutton, and beef should return a fair margin of profit to the producers.

AUCKLAND

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

A review of the past year's operations in farming under all headings points to a fairly satisfactory conclusion in so far as the whole season is concerned. An anxious time was experienced in mid-summer by many of our settlers due to a prolonged spell of dry weather which brought about a serious shortage of feed for stock and of pasture for haymaking, where under average conditions of rainfall ample supplies of both pasture and supplementary crops would have been available.

The position, however, has become much improved owing to the breaking of the drought and timely rains, which, with mild weather, have combined to bring about a rapid recovery with prospects of stock of all classes going into the winter in good or very fair condition.

The shortage of manure, due to limited supply, and the necessity for continued rationing, is having its effect on production where dairying is concerned, especially on our lighter and only partially-improved lands, and a reduction in the size of herds may become necessary due to the decreased carrying-capacity of the holdings concerned. Against this, the elimination of the old-time fluctuation and uncertainty of prices and the full and continued demand for everything that the farmer can produce off the farm is of inestimable benefit to all the existing settlement on the Crown lands throughout this district, and there should be no difficulty in the meeting of rents and interest accruing to the Department as they become due.

GISBORNE

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

The season throughout the district may be regarded as having been a wet one, culminating with a very severe flood on the 7th March. The damage as a result of this flood on the Poverty Bay flats to the maize and vegetable crops was very extensive. Fortunately, apart from some isolated cases, the stock losses were light.

The lambing percentages throughout the district, especially the northern end of the East Coast district, were higher than the previous season. Due to the climatic conditions, the wool-clip was lighter. Stock-prices have been satisfactory for sheep, whilst the prices ruling for cattle have been higher than for the past six years. The opening of the railway-line to the Gisborne District has extended the market for the surplus stock from this district. Sheep and cattle are now sought after by the Hawke's Bay District, whilst a number of sheep have been purchased for the Wanganui District. Despite the wet season and the abundance of feed, facial eczema has not been prevalent.

The experience gained as a result of the flooding of the various rivers, especially the Waipaoa, over a number of years clearly shows that an extensive flood-prevention policy is long overdue. The erosion of the back country which has been deprived of its forest cover has resulted in the beds of the rivers on the flat and more fertile lands being built up, with the subsequent overflowing of the banks. An extensive afforestation programme in the watersheds of the rivers concerned appears the only solution, but this question can only be decided after a thorough investigation of the problem.