

HAWKE'S BAY

(F. R. BURNLEY, Commissioner of Crown Lands)

The autumn of last year was a very mild and dry one throughout the district, but without the usual quantity of rain so necessary to promote a good autumn growth to carry the stock through the winter. Hence feed was not too plentiful and a considerable number of cattle had to be moved out of the district. Stock losses were accordingly higher than on the average, but early spring rains brought on a sufficiency of feed fairly early in the year and many farmers were able to make quite a good recovery in the quality of their stock.

Throughout the summer there have been constant rains well spread throughout the area and the country has at no time assumed the dry appearance one often associates with Hawke's Bay. There has been ample feed available, with a fairly good lambing percentage and a good weight of wool.

There still seems to be a tendency in some districts to change over from dairying to sheep, and this is probably due to the labour shortage. Conditions in this respect will no doubt right themselves as time goes on.

Weeds and rabbits seem to have increased fairly considerably, and will no doubt be a cause for much concern from now on. Likewise, no solution yet presents itself in respect of the deterioration of back country pastoral land. Reversion still continues, and will do so, no doubt, until normal conditions return.

Most of the settlers in this district seem to be in a fairly satisfactory position, judging by the payments of rent and the reduction in the arrears outstanding. The position is probably better now than it has been for a long time past.

There has not been a great demand for land, although inquiries are still received quite regularly for anything in the nature of first-class dairying or cropping land or for the 5-acre sections. Seaside subdivisions have also been readily inquired for.

Generally speaking, conditions have been very satisfactory throughout the district for the whole of the year, and these are likely to continue as far as Hawke's Bay is concerned.

TARANAKI

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

The year generally, from a productive point of view, was less favourable than the past few years. This was to some extent attributable to unfavourable climatic conditions, but largely to lack of labour combined with the restricted amount of fertilizer available.

The autumn of 1943 was not unfavourable and stock in most cases entered a moderate winter in good condition. Spring conditions were wet and cold, and about the middle of November a dry spell set in that persisted, with minor breaks, till the end of January. Adequate rains in February and March have greatly assisted recovery in the butterfat yield and have given Taranaki one of the greenest autumns experienced for years.

Labour shortage is at present the most serious problem confronting the farmer, and the position will remain acute while the war lasts. Practically no development work is being done, and in the majority of cases ordinary farm-maintenance is being neglected. This is particularly apparent in the hill country, where scrub-cutting and fence-maintenance demand constant attention.

Farmers are making the best use possible of the fertilizer available, eking it out with lime in many cases. Deterioration of pasture through insufficient top-dressing is noticeable, particularly on poorer types of land.

Ragwort is in evidence again in many localities, due no doubt to labour shortage combined with lack of sodium chlorate.

WELLINGTON

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

Following a good autumn, a wet, though not excessively cold, winter was experienced, which was not conducive to the best conditions for stock. The continuous wet weather in the spring had an adverse effect on the lambs, and weights were down about 3 lb. or 4 lb. on the previous season, and a longer period was necessary before lambs were fit for the works. From the end of November until the middle of February practically no rain fell in the southern and central portions of the district, with the result that much of the grasslands bear a parched appearance. The drought conditions prevailing at this period have been responsible to some extent for a reduction in butterfat-production in the locality. Prices for all classes of stock have been high, fat bullocks having been sold in the Feilding yards at up to £25 per head. The inability of farmers to obtain adequate supplies of fertilizers is being reflected in the pastures and may be the cause of lighter lambs and, to a lesser degree, the decline in butterfat. Those settlers who availed themselves of the Unemployment 4B Scheme to clean up weed- and scrub-infested areas on their farms are still deriving benefits from the work done, and it is pleasing to note that the areas operated upon are being maintained. The large number of tenants who applied to have their affairs adjusted in terms of the Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act, 1936, are still feeling the benefits of the decisions of the Adjustment Commissions and the Court of Review and are for the most part able to meet their payments without difficulty. There is a good demand for farm lands, and any areas thrown on the market are eagerly sought after.