

EXTENSION DIVISION

REPORT OF P. W. SMALLFIELD, DIRECTOR

AMALGAMATION OF FIELDS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISIONS

The Fields and Rural Development Divisions were amalgamated and reorganized as the Extension Division as from 1st August, 1948. The Rural Development Division was established to study farm management and economics, farm engineering, farm forestry, and rural sociology, and to supply statistical, economic, and technical information on primary production. The Division had always worked in very close collaboration with the Fields Division, and the amalgamation of the Divisions has widened the sphere of extension activities of local Instructors in Agriculture and has allowed a wider degree of decentralization by making each Fields Superintendent's district responsible for local research and instruction work of both of the former Divisions.

THE 1948-49 SEASON

Weather

The season was generally a favourable one for farm production, particularly in the dairying districts of the North Island. Throughout the Dominion the autumn and winter were exceptionally mild.

In the North Island heavy rainfalls occurred during May with some flooding in the Bay of Plenty and Poverty Bay. In the remainder of Auckland Province occasional heavy falls continued through to early spring with cool temperatures. During late spring and summer, temperatures were warm and falls of rain evenly spread. Almost similar conditions prevailed in the northern part of Wellington Province, but farther south the spring was more favourable and a hot, dry period in December was followed by heavy rains in east coast districts. The early autumn continued cool and moist with prolific growth of crops and pastures. Harvesting conditions were not, however, particularly difficult, as there were frequent spells of dry weather throughout the harvesting season.

Canterbury experienced a dry season and there was less rain than usual during winter, which accentuated the hot, dry conditions during summer.

In Marlborough there was a good deal of rain in the winter, with flooding in May and July. Westland experienced a cold and wet season right through to midsummer.

North Otago and Central Otago had a dry season, but in the remainder of Otago and in Southland mild winter conditions were followed by adequate rainfall and warm temperatures. Early in November flooding occurred in the lower Clutha area. Frosts early in January and again in February caused losses in wheat and potatoes, but generally the season was the most favourable for many years.

Pastures

Because of the mild, wet winter and absence of dry conditions during summer, pastures produced exceptionally well in most parts of the North Island. Some shortages of feed occurred during August and September in parts of Auckland Province, but prolific growth in late spring and early summer was general and caused difficulties in controlling pasture. Similar conditions in the central part of the North Island enabled grassland to recover from the effects of the drought in the autumn of 1948, but in southern Hawkes Bay and the Wairarapa winter conditions were not so favourable, causing pastures to be fairly bare until the spring. Along the west coast of Wellington Province pasture growth was exceptionally good from early spring onward.

In Canterbury, after a good deal of growth in autumn and early winter, pastures were affected by summer drought. In Marlborough, grass growth during the season was better than average, but on the west coast of the South Island growth was spasmodic.