

other matters connected with their various duties. Reports received from the field officers indicate that the majority of returned soldiers who have taken up fruitgrowing for a livelihood are making satisfactory progress. Considerable time has been devoted to attending to their requirements in the matter of advice and practical demonstrations.

The estimated area planted in commercial orchards during the year is 402 acres, which is a slight decrease as compared with the previous year's figures. The area (in acres) planted during the 1920 planting season in the respective districts is as follows: Whangarei, 25; North Auckland, 80; South Auckland, 30; Poverty Bay, 30; Hawke's Bay, 75; Manawatu and Wairarapa, 2; Nelson, 30; Motueka, 50; Marlborough, 5; North Canterbury, 40; South Canterbury, 10; Otago, 25: total, 402. The total area of registered commercial orchards for the whole of the Dominion is now 29,696 acres.

During the year a new orchard-inspection district was created in the Nelson Province, where fruit-growing has made rapid strides during the last few years. This comprises the Tasman and Moutere Hills, the Orchard Instructor's headquarters being at Mapua. An Instructor has also been stationed at Gisborne, which district was previously worked from Hastings. Both these subdivisions are undoubtedly steps in the right direction, and will enable more attention to be given in the smaller districts thus created.

Orchard Diseases.—As mentioned in my last report, an outbreak of fireblight disease in fruit-trees unfortunately occurred in the Auckland District towards the end of the year 1919. Steps were at once taken by the Department to combat the disease. The bulk of the field officers of the Horticulture Division were concentrated in the affected area, and a number of temporary inspectors appointed to assist in locating and cutting out infection wherever found. A strong fireblight committee of Auckland District growers was formed, and rendered valuable assistance in coping with the trouble. Regulations preventing the removal of certain plants from the Auckland District were brought into operation, and steps were also taken prohibiting the movement of bees except under approved conditions. Although good work has been carried out, it is recognized that to satisfactorily deal with fireblight the total eradication of hawthorn, which acts as a suitable host for the disease, is necessary. The question as to the manner in which this work will be undertaken is at present receiving consideration.

Where proper steps have been taken the ordinary diseases found in orchards have been kept under control. Brown-rot in stone-fruits has been less pronounced. The pear-leaf midge has made its appearance in the Auckland District, and steps are being taken which it is considered will control this pest.

The majority of commercial growers now realize the necessity for the application of modern methods in combating fungus and insect pests, and it is gratifying to note that hand-power sprayers are being slowly but surely replaced by modern motor-power machines. There are still, however, a considerable number of growers who, although given reasonable opportunity, neglect to take proper measures for the control of diseases and pests. It was found necessary during the period under review to take proceedings under the Orchard and Garden Diseases Act against a number of such persons in different districts throughout the Dominion. The Department is loath to take such action, but, unfortunately, there are some people who must be prosecuted if clean orchards are to be attained. It is hoped that these prosecutions will act as a warning to others failing to comply with the requirements of the Act.

Export of Fruit.—As mentioned in my previous report, a commencement has again been made in the export trade in fruit, which had ceased in 1916 owing to unsettled conditions brought about by the war. A total of 34,585 packages—consisting of 33,576 cases apples and 1,009 cases pears—were shipped to London in the first two months of the year under review, the whole of the fruit being consigned through the New Zealand Fruitgrowers' Federation (Limited), Wellington. The following are particulars of the shipments made:—

Steamer.			Date of Departure.			Apples.	Pears.
						Cases.	Cases.
S.s. "Athenic"	..	..	4th April, 1920	..	..	14,757	238
S.s. "Port Napier"	..	..	18th April, 1920	..	..	12,416	771
S.s. "Corinthic"	..	..	2nd May, 1920	..	..	6,403	..
Totals	..	..	..			33,576	1,009

With the exception of a small consignment from Hawke's Bay the whole of the fruit was sent from the Nelson District. Reports received from the High Commissioner, London, indicate that the bulk of the apple shipments arrived in good condition and realized very satisfactory prices, no claim being made on the Government guarantee of 1d. per pound. Varieties reported on favourably were Jonathan, Munroe's Favourite, Delicious, Cleopatra, and Sturmer Pippin. Cox's Orange Pippin was again found to be a bad carrier, and very few of this variety arrived in a marketable condition. The majority of the pears, unfortunately, opened up in a more or less damaged state.

Towards the end of the year it was arranged for Mr. G. Stratford, Orchard Instructor, Christchurch, who had been granted six months' leave of absence to visit England, to make a special inspection and report on the condition, &c., of fruit shipped to London during the 1921 season, and to secure all information likely to be of value in connection with the future export of fruit from the Dominion. The results of his investigations should prove of great benefit to the fruit industry as a whole.