

FRUIT COOL STORAGE.

The storage capacity of the fruit cool stores was fully taxed during the year, and the bulk of the fruit kept in good condition. It is very satisfactory to report that as a result of the continued investigations carried out in the Nelson district by Mr. R. Waters, of the Biological Laboratory, with the assistance of officers attached to this Division, there was very little sign of flesh-collapse in the Nelson and Motueka cool stores during the past year. Arrangements have been made for the carrying-out of investigations in regard to fruit cool storage in the Auckland district during the coming year.

VITICULTURE AND WINE-MAKING.

The area planted in vineyards is steadily increasing, the total area now under grape-vines being estimated at approximately 261 acres. The past season was very unfavourable to grape-production, both outdoor and under glass, continuous cold wet weather experienced in most of the vine-growing areas preventing the proper ripening of the fruit, which as a result was low in sugar content. Considerable damage was also done by hail to outdoor-grown crops, and fungus disease was more prevalent than usual. Downy mildew made its appearance in several districts in the North Island. Energetic measures are being taken to keep this somewhat serious disease under control.

In consequence of the abnormal season the grape crop, both table and wine-producing, was considerably below the average. The quantity of wine produced in the Dominion is estimated at 60,000 gallons, valued at £24,000, which is well below that of the previous year—viz., 85,000 gallons, valued at £34,000. There is a good demand for hothouse-grown grapes, and a number of new glass-houses have been erected during the year.

CIDER-MAKING.

The making of cider is receiving increased attention in districts throughout the Dominion, a large number of fruitgrowers now recognizing that the manufacture of this beverage is a profitable side-line to their business. It is estimated some 60,000 gallons of cider were produced valued at approximately £13,750—an increase of 10,000 gallons as compared with the previous year's figures. Up-to-date cider mills and presses are now being made in the Dominion, several of these having already been turned out to order.

TE KAUWHATA HORTICULTURE STATION.

The weather experienced during the year was extremely wet and unseasonable, and, while it was favourable to grass production, the conditions were totally unsuitable for the production of most fruits. Grass was very slow in starting in the early spring, but after September the growth was phenomenal. Approximately 30 tons of hay were secured from 12 acres which had been shut up for the purpose. Eleven acres were sown in swedes, and 4 acres of old worn-out pasture were broken up and laid down in permanent grass, both crops being now in a flourishing condition. About 30 acres of the wattle plantation have been cleared and burnt, and a portion of 3 acres stumped and ploughed during the winter. This is now carrying a crop of swedes.

The breeding-ewes wintered satisfactorily, with only a slight mortality, which was due no doubt to the excessive wet weather experienced during the lambing period. The returns received from the sale of live-stock were: Wool and skins, £118 4s. 5d.; fat lambs, £313 7s. 2d.; fat sheep, £66 16s.; cattle, £27: total, £525 7s. 7d. There being little demand for wattle-bark, none was stripped from the plantations during the year. Approximately 60 tons out of 100 tons on hand at the end of last financial year were sold to tanners. Timber-cutting on a royalty basis was carried on, and a fair quantity of firewood was cut and sold locally. The revenue from the plantations for the year was: Wattle-bark, £524 4s.; firewood, £129 4s.; posts, £5 13s. 6d.; royalties, £263 6s. 3d.; grazing-rights, £6 10s.: total, £928 17s. 9d. The gall fungus is still making headway in the plantations, and has caused a large number of trees to die out during the year.

Considerable difficulty was experienced in carrying out cultural and spraying operations in the vineyard owing to the continued wet weather. The adverse conditions prevented free pollination, and as a result the grape crop was a very light one. The manurial experiments in the vineyard, which were commenced last year, were continued, but they were hampered as regards definite results by the extremely wet weather experienced right throughout the growing-period. It has been decided to continue the experiments for another two seasons.

Wine-sales were not quite so brisk as those of the previous year, but are considered, on the whole, satisfactory. The quantities of wine sold during the year are as follows:—

	Quantity. Gallons.	Value.		
		£	s.	d.
Frontignac	8,297	4,037	0	6
Madeira	2,770	1,483	6	7
Claret	216	133	15	5
	11,283	£5,654	2	6

The above represents a decrease of 1,648 gallons and £857 4s. 8d. in value as compared with the previous year's figures.

An addition has been made to the cellar buildings. This will relieve the present cramped conditions, and will also tend to economize labour in the handling and storing of wine.