

The practice of top-dressing pastures with artificial fertilizers has continued to expand to such an extent (aided by much lower prices for phosphatic manures) that fertilizer-manufacturers have found difficulty in keeping pace with the demand for their products. The value of top-dressing has been proved up to the hilt, and it has now become a regular feature of the season's operations on dairy farms. It will be important to keep an eye to results as years go on, and to watch for any possible developments arising from the continued applications of phosphatic fertilizers accompanied by heavy grazing.

THE HEMP INDUSTRY.

This industry continues in a generally satisfactory condition. The growing of phormium under cultivation has taken quite a step forward during the year, this being largely brought about by the formation of new companies for the purpose. A considerable increase in the amount of hemp-fibre and its allied by-products may therefore be expected during the next few years.

The hemp-grading staff, under the supervision of the Director of the Fields Division, has had a busy year, with satisfactory results.

FARM ECONOMICS.

The work of the farm economics branch of the Fields Division, in the hands of Mr. E. J. Fawcett, is making excellent headway considering the volume of detailed work necessary in respect of any particular section of farming before any reliable conclusions can be arrived at. The objective of the Department in this connection has become more fully realized by the farming community, and it is being found that most settlers now have no objection to supplying any data for which they are asked. The assistance of farmers in this economic work is vital to its success, and it is desired to place on record the Department's thanks to all those who have readily complied with its requests for information.

ORCHARD INSTRUCTION.

The instruction staff of the Horticulture Division, under the leadership of Mr. J. A. Campbell, Director, has had a busy and a useful year in assisting fruitgrowers to improve the quality of their product, increase their production, and cope with the various troubles affecting their orchards, and also in the inspection of fruit for export. Full details of the work of the Horticulture Division will be found in the divisional report appended.

Those diseases which are controllable, with our present knowledge, have been vigorously dealt with. Others, concerning which more has yet to be learned, have been dealt with to the best advantage in the circumstances, aided by the information supplied by the Biological Laboratory staff as a result of the study and investigation of these diseases which is in progress. The volume of experimental work done in orchards has been very considerable.

Fireblight has been troublesome, the disease having made its appearance in the Hawke's Bay, Wairarapa, and Manawatu districts. It has been energetically handled, and every effort made to control and eradicate it. A difficult feature of control and eradication methods lies in the fact that hawthorn is a host plant, and some farmers who possess hawthorn hedges naturally resent being asked to destroy them. It is a case of one section of the rural community being asked to make a sacrifice for the benefit of another section, and the extent to which farmers here meet fruitgrowers in this matter is most satisfactory. There has been some friction and some trouble, but the divisional officers have generally shown tact and discretion, and have done their best to deal satisfactorily with a very difficult matter.

FRUIT-EXPORT.

Particulars of the fruit-export trade for the year will be found in the divisional report. The financial results of the current season have been in marked contrast to those of the previous year, when the guarantee given by the Government as to net return to the grower had to be heavily called upon. This season's prices have been good, and it is anticipated that at the end of the selling season the export trade will be found to have been quite self-supporting.

The divisional officers carried out a large volume of work in supervising the grading of export fruit and in inspecting it, and they were able to do this with the cordial co-operation both of fruitgrowers and the Fruit-export Board.

COOL STORAGE OF FRUIT.

Very little trouble has been experienced during the year from flesh-collapse or other cool-storage troubles in the stores in the Dominion, and the investigations which have been going on for some time past have evidently given good results. The fruit exported also carried well at sea generally, and the shipping companies concerned must be congratulated upon the care and skill exercised by their officers in bringing this about.