

A further expansion of the investigation work is in hand. Some experiments on a small scale made last year gave promising results from the use of iron compounds as a top-dressing for pastures on affected country. The results were not uniformly good, but quite good enough to warrant further experimental work on a larger scale. This is now being planned.

In addition a systematic soil-survey of the affected area is in progress, and, together with this, a large number of chemical analyses of grasses and other pasture-plants have been and are still being made.

RUAKURA STATE FARM.

This farm has experienced, on the whole, a good year, and the Manager is to be complimented on the progress made. Extensive improvements have been carried out, adding substantially to the value of the property. These include new farm buildings, new fencing, further water-supply, and pasture-improvement.

For the twelve months ended the 30th June, 1926, the milking-herd, with fourteen additional cows, yielded butterfat to the value of £1,483, as compared with £638 for the preceding twelve months. For the current year the return will be less, as trouble occurred through an outbreak of abortion, and the rate paid out for butterfat was less. A good deal of culling of the least profitable cows is being done.

New accommodation for feeding and housing calves has been provided, and ninety-four calves were reared, all in excellent health and condition. Increased accommodation for swine is being provided. The demand for pigs of the Large White breed has been far in excess of the available supply. The poultry premises have been entirely remodelled, the old plant having been demolished and replaced by a modern structure. At the apiary eight cadets (four men and four women) went through a six-months course of training. The horticulture section has been completely remodelled.

The payments for the year, including permanent salaries, were £12,971, this also including the cost of staffing and maintaining the Farm Training College. The total receipts amounted to £8,690. The receipts would have been increased by approximately £900 but for the fact that the year's output of fat lambs were frozen and shipped to England on the Department's own account, and that none of the returns from these had come to hand before the end of the financial year.

THE RUAKURA FARM TRAINING COLLEGE.

A substantial increase in the number of applications for places which has been experienced during the year would appear to indicate that the excellent facilities which Ruakura can offer for the training of youths in farming pursuits are becoming better known and appreciated. Besides having fifty-two students in residence, which represents the limit of the accommodation, there are also a number of applicants on the waiting-list. Twelve of the students now in residence are from Britain, being holders of Fellowship of the British Empire scholarships, which, among other privileges, entitles them to twelve months' training at this farm. Improvements at the students' quarters during the year include wardrobes in the bedrooms and the provision of a comfortable and commodious sitting-room.

As from January next a course covering one year will be substituted for the present course, which covers two years. Provision is to be made, however, for enabling a few approved students to continue into a second year on a special course.

WERAROA STATE FARM.

Unfavourable weather conditions in early spring prevented this farm having a good season. In October the rainfall was 9.25 in., and this greatly retarded sowing operations.

The Friesian and the Red Poll herds have been kept at a high standard, but it is regretted that at the annual sale the demand for purebred stock from the Friesian herd was poor and unsatisfactory—an experience, however, not confined to this herd alone last year. The Red Polls sold well. The farm had a successful season so far as its exhibits at agricultural and pastoral shows were concerned, the total prize-money received amounting to £35 17s. for Friesian cattle, £57 12s. for Red Polls, and £13 10s. for pigs. At the Royal Show, in Auckland, the Friesians gained one first, one third, and a special prize, while the Red Polls gained six firsts, one championship, and one reserve championship.

As regards pigs, there has been a good and steady demand for both the Berkshires and Large Blacks, and the results of the pig section can be regarded as satisfactory. The Ryeland sheep have done well, and the stud flock now contains some 160 ewes.