

Very little rye-grass was saved, and this industry, once one of the stable industries of the district, seems to be on the decline. A fair quantity of wheat was grown and turned out well. The production of chaff was considerably above requirements and the stores are full. Prospects for the coming season in all classes of farming are very bright.

Noxious Weeds.—The blackberry pest is still a serious menace in some parts of the district, and complaints have also been received regarding the spread of gorse. Rabbits are practically non-existent, thanks to the energies of the East Coast Rabbit Board.

Lands opened for Selection.—Very little new land was offered for selection during the year. Some large areas of forfeited holdings in the Opotiki County were withdrawn and reoffered rent-free for five years, but only one or two of the sections were selected. The loading for improvements appears to be the obstacle to favourable reoccupation of these areas. Some small lots near Ruatoria offered for sale at the end of the year realized large prices.

Board Work.—The Land Board held twelve meetings during the year, one-day meetings being the rule. The Board members, as usual, applied themselves to their duties in a praiseworthy and capable manner. Messrs. J. H. Reid and R. H. Wicksteed were reappointed for a further term. I must again acknowledge the courtesy of the press in the matter of full reports of Board meetings, and the very cordial relationships which still exist between the Office and the legal and mercantile firms of the district.

Deteriorated Lands.—All applications under the Deteriorated Lands Act, 1925, were finally dealt with during the year, the policy of affording relief by granting remission of rent for five years on certain conditions being continued. In several cases as the result of pressure by the Board the mortgagees reduced their mortgages. The credits created in many cases through reduction in capital values have been applied towards effecting further improvements. Most of the settlers concerned are now tackling their jobs with new spirit, and their prospects are infinitely better than they have been for many years past.

Lands to be opened for Selection.—The lands which should be opened for selection during the ensuing year include five blocks—Tuparoa consolidation (6,000 acres); Poroporo (7,500 acres); Crown land, Block XXI, Mangahopai (4,780 acres). About half of this country is in heavy bush, some of it being about the best bush land left in this district. The total area to be opened next year is approximately 19,000 acres. Amongst the blocks that will be available for disposal subsequent to 1928 are Tangihanga (1,200 acres) and Tahora (16,600 acres).

HAWKE'S BAY.

(J. D. THOMSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past season, as affecting Hawke's Bay, has probably been the most satisfactory in the farming history of the province. Favoured with wonderful autumn growth, a mild winter and almost complete absence of high drying winds during the spring and summer, and with warm, soft rains evenly distributed throughout the season, stock of all descriptions have done wonderfully well. The lambing percentage has been higher, the markets for fat lambs better, the weight of wool heavier, and there has been an increase in the price of all classes of wool. It is estimated that Hawke's Bay farmers will profit to the extent of £500,000 over the last season's wool returns alone.

There has been a very cheering rise in the price of cattle, due to several causes. The fact that during the past two dry seasons, over 80,000 head of cattle were sent out of the district, together with the heavy death-rate incurred through the drought, had very considerably depleted the herds, while the present phenomenal growth of grass makes it imperative for the sheep-farmer to run a larger number of cattle than usual in order to cope with the otherwise rank feed.

An evenly balanced rainfall and an almost entire absence of high winds, hailstorms, or late frost, resulted in the setting of a heavy fruit crop. Probably 170,000 cases of apples will be exported this season—practically double last season's export.

The numerous fine stacks of lucerne hay, meadow-grass, and clover throughout the district is ample evidence of heavy harvestings, and a liberal supply of good nutritious fodder for winter consumption is assured.

The dairy-farmer, on the whole, has also had a remarkably good season. In certain portions of the district, it is true, a setback was experienced during the dry spell in January and February, when the returns dropped by a third, but the total returns go to prove that the district has experienced one of the best seasons yet recorded. There is still vast room for improvement with our dairy-farmers in farm management and control. Too little attention is paid to herd-testing and rigorous culling, though it is satisfactory to note that the benefits derivable from top-dressing and shelter-belts are now receiving full consideration.

Taken altogether, the prospects for the coming season in Hawke's Bay are particularly bright and promising.

Tomato-culture has now reached the position of a highly profitable industry, particularly in the warm, frost-free areas around about Petane and in the Esk Valley, where heavy crops have been marketed. Over 40,000 cases were picked.

Land Board.—The Board held twelve meetings during the year, and visits of inspection were made to the Crownthorpe and Otawhao Settlements.

Revenue.—The ordinary revenue for the year amounted to £140,197, while the total arrears amounted to £12,442. Compared with last year's figures, the position is very satisfactory in that the revenue has increased by £7,577 and arrears decreased by £1,153.

Noxious Weeds.—While there has been no marked increase in the spread of the blackberry menace, the problem of successfully coping with it seems as far off solution as ever, though the weight of evidence in favour of the good work to be done by the goat is steadily increasing.