

AUCKLAND.

(K. M. GRAHAM, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the year ended 31st March, 1929, farming has prospered in all its branches throughout the Auckland Land District. Production has increased in volume, and market prices have been highly satisfactory, the present indications being that the actual production year will, at the close of the season, show that all previous records in dairying have been eclipsed, and that the aggregate returns from sheep are at least equal to, if not better than, the very satisfactory results of last year. A good mild winter was experienced, and all classes of stock came through in good condition; and though some rather severe cold snaps were experienced in the spring of the year, their effect upon dairy production was not sufficient to prevent the yield from continuing in advance of that for the corresponding period of the previous season. A temporary setback, due to several weeks of very dry weather, occurred in the midsummer period, but since then the rainfall has been ample for all requirements, and this, aided by the results of intensive top-dressing of pastures, has left little room for complaint as the season continued.

Sheep-farming and Grazing.—Following the excellent results of last year, local sheep and wool sales this season have again yielded very satisfactory profits to sheep-farmers and graziers. A mild winter and a good lambing season were experienced, a fairly large number of lambs making their appearance in one part of the district early in July. With a satisfactory percentage and low mortality-rate the season opened well, and has since proved itself to be one of excellent all-round values and increased production in all parts of the Auckland district.

Dairy-farming.—A general air of prosperity has characterized the dairying industry over the past year. Farms show an improvement as a result of better farming and more subdivision into paddocks, and it is evident that a progressive interest on sound and practical lines is being taken in the management of pastures and the culling of the dairy herds. Top-dressing of pastures has now become one of the greatest features of dairy-farming, it being recognized that the overhead cost of production can best be reduced by producing more per acre, and that this can be achieved by building up the soil-fertility by surface-dressing with artificial manures.

A dry spell was again experienced this season, but it was of much shorter duration than that of last year, and though a marked check in the dairy output was noticeable at the time, a good recovery has been made, and the season should prove to be another record one when the final returns become available in August next. All hay was harvested in good condition, and there are large stocks of both hay and ensilage on hand for winter feeding as required.

Special Settlement of Inferior Lands.—As mentioned in my report of last year, an area of 6,933 acres of pumice land in the Rotorua district was opened for selection. Of this area 2,704 acres were taken up by nine selectors, and since then one holding of 389 acres has been surrendered and a new selection made of two sections comprising 1,251 acres. The position as at the 31st March, 1929, is that there are still nine selectors, covering a total area of 3,566 acres.

Revaluations under Section 216 of Land Act, 1924.—The number of applications dealt with during the year was ninety-two, resulting in reductions in capital values amounting to £47,349, and in annual rent to £2,362. There are eighteen further applications yet remaining to be dealt with by the Revaluation Committee.

Land opened for Selection.—The total area opened for selection during the year amounted to 58,973 acres, while 43,118 acres were taken up by 199 selectors, representing an increase over last year of sixty-two selectors and 21,547 acres of land.

Land Board.—During the year twelve meetings were held, occupying forty-two days, and a total of 1,702 cases were dealt with, comprising chiefly applications for land, transfer of leases and licenses, applications for advances and relief under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, as well as a considerable number of miscellaneous cases.

Revenue.—The ordinary revenue for the year amounted to £130,390, being an increase on last year's figures of £12,565. It is particularly pleasing to note this increase in spite of the fact that substantial concessions have been granted to settlers during the year by way of remissions, postponements, and revaluations.

GISBORNE.

(E. H. FARNIE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

General Conditions of Settlements.—The conditions throughout the year were on the whole very favourable, and the results on every class of farming have been good. As the conditions vary slightly in different parts of the district I have deemed it advisable to report on the different areas separately.

Poverty Bay.—Stock generally went into winter well, but possibly the ewes were in too forward condition, and the lambing was approximately 15 per cent. lower than usual. Cattle did exceptionally well—in fact, better than for many years past. Hoggets also did well, and in most districts were better grown after winter than usual. Prices as compared with previous year: Sheep, increase of 1s. 6d. to 2s. per head; cattle, increase of £1 to £1 10s. per head; wool—the prices of wool sold at Napier sales from November to March this year averaged 14·82d. per pound, as against 15·64d. per pound for the same period last year.

Prospects: Sheep—two-tooth ewes and two-tooth wethers will be scarce, due to poor lambing and wet autumn and winter. Other ewes should maintain last season's selling-prices. This also applies to cattle.