

disappointing results. Prices of sheep have maintained a fairly high level, with keen demand for any lines of good quality, and in spite of the drop in wool the price of sheep remains fairly high.

Dairying.—On account of the luxuriant growth of grass the dairy-farmers have had a very good season. The prices paid out by the various factories have been fairly high. There has been a very keen demand for store cattle, which has assisted the dairy-farmers considerably in disposing of surplus stock.

Deteriorated Lands.—The burning and resowing of fern and secondary growth in the dry summer and autumn of 1928 is now showing beneficial results in many back-country localities, and has assisted materially in counteracting the deterioration. Lime and phosphates are being used in increasing quantities by farmers, with very satisfactory results.

Orchards.—The apple crop this year is somewhat lighter than last year, but the fruit is generally larger. On account of the wet season some difficulty has been experienced in controlling black spot.

Hops, Tobacco, and Small Fruits.—The hop crop generally has been fairly heavy and has been harvested in good condition. There is approximately 750 acres of tobacco now grown in the Nelson district, but the permanence of the tobacco-growing industry depends on the maintenance of remunerative prices for the leaf. Small fruits generally have given good results, and prove a satisfactory crop to the small farmer.

Pakihi Lands.—The Cawthron Institute has been experimenting near Westport in the economical development of "pakihi" lands. A demonstration area on a larger scale is now to be undertaken in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture.

Revenue.—The revenue received during the year totalled £62,106. Of this amount £15,690 was received from ordinary Crown tenants, the balance being receipts on account of discharged soldier settlers. These figures show an increase on last year of £5,636.

Land Board.—Twelve monthly meetings were held during the year, when a total of 586 cases were dealt with. I wish to thank the members of the Board for their co-operation and assistance in all matters brought before them.

MARLBOROUGH.

(P. R. WILKINSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Climatic conditions in the Marlborough Land District during the past twelve months have been varied, but the year's results may be considered fairly satisfactory. Mild conditions during late autumn and winter were favourable to all classes of farming, and stock came through in good condition. A wet early spring followed and made the operations of the agriculturist somewhat erratic, with the result that many crops were late-sown. Ideal conditions followed until the end of December, when rainy conditions again threatened the crops and caused much anxiety during the harvesting period. Returns were affected and the yields generally were below average. Barley-growers will be the chief sufferers from this and also on account of prices, as it is feared that prices will show a substantial decline. Generally a good healthy tone prevails throughout the district.

Sheep and Wool.—The sheep-farmer has experienced, all things considered, a very successful year, conditions being favourable throughout. Although wool-prices dropped during the sales, the better quality and weight produced counteracted somewhat the decline. The bulk of Marlborough wool is sold through Christchurch and Wellington, and it is estimated that the average prices per pound for the season's sales are: Merino, 18d.; half-bred, 17d.; three-quarter bred, 16d.; Crossbred, 15d.; and lambs' wool, 16½d.

Ram and ewe fairs were held during the year at Blenheim and Seddon, when good entries were submitted to fair attendance of buyers. Many of the best studs, however, are not submitted, breeders realizing that they must seek outside markets to obtain prices near value. It is estimated that over one thousand stud rams have been distributed throughout New Zealand from this district.

Sheep-sales are held regularly, and good prices in advance of last year's rates are maintained, young ewes in particular being sought for. Fat-lamb sales opened well, and prices were maintained until recently, when a slight drop was noticeable.

The freezing-works situated at Picton is in full work, and it is estimated that 120,000 carcasses will be handled, 75 per cent. being lambs.

Dairy-farming.—This industry is steadily increasing, and lands hitherto confined to agriculture are gradually passing over to the cow. The season has been a good one, prices being satisfactory and feed plentiful. Herd-testing is not indulged in as freely as is warranted, but an improvement is noticeable in the efforts of settlers to cull the non-paying animals. A recent statement of the Herd-testing Association disclosed that about 2,200 cows were under test, so that there is room for much improvement. With the application of top-dressing, herd-testing, selection of cows and sires, and provision of winter feed the dairying industry should vastly improve. Average price for butterfat for the season is about 1s. 4½d., with prospects of a bonus.

Agriculture.—This branch of farming has not been up to average, and is gradually giving way to dairying and sheep-fattening, which promise a more assured income. A total of 25,000 acres was sown last season in cereal and pulse crops.

Orchards.—About 500 acres are devoted to apple-production. The season has been generally favourable, and export figures should exceed last year's total of 31,000 cases, which was a record for the district.