

The drainage in this block by the Crown has been very effective, and the swamp land has dried out well. Some of these settlers have been dairying throughout the season, and next season will probably find all the settlers dairying on the areas suitable. The hill sections produced a good percentage of lambs; but, unfortunately, one settler had a heavy loss of young lambs in a cold southerly storm. The settlers on the Okarae Block near Dannevirke have made good progress in the development of their holdings, and although the block has only been opened a little more than twelve months, their success in the future seems fairly sure.

The older-settled areas are showing fair progress generally, but not to the extent that could be desired. This is no doubt owing to shortage of capital in consequence of low prices and the overhead costs necessary to keep the sections free from second-growth fern, &c. Where outside labour is necessary to keep down scrub, the holdings have invariably gone back considerably as the lessees are not in a financial position to pay wages.

TARANAKI.

(W. D. ARMIT, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The winter and spring months of 1931 were unfavourable to the farmer in Taranaki, particularly in the northern portion of the district. Although winter feed was provided in good quantities, a shortage occurred owing to a long and severe winter, and stock did not come through so well as in former years. Later on, a dry summer was favourable to graziers, permitting a good deal of burning and cleaning-up on hill country. Late rains occurred in February and March, but rather too late to benefit the dairy-farmer. In spite of these drawbacks, production was fairly well maintained, and in many cases a substantial increase on individual farms has occurred in butterfat production.

Lambing percentages were satisfactory, except on properties of a rough, reverted nature, where dry stock should really be farmed in preference to breeding-stock, if wool prices would permit of a livelihood being earned in this manner. Lambs generally in the early part of the spring were not so forward as in previous years.

The very low level of wool prices was further affected by the presence of a good deal of inferior seedy wool from portions of the Taranaki back country. Hutuwai is very noticeable in a number of clips and earlier shearing should be carried out wherever this is possible. Undoubtedly climatic conditions often govern the matter, but early shearing would often be possible if opportunity is taken to do so. Wool-buyers have shown a marked indifference this year to wool affected with hutuwai, and no effort should be spared to remedy this serious defect.

The farming community is doing its utmost to increase production, and the capable dairyman on many farms is paying his way at 1s. per pound butterfat. This is only done by great economy and careful husbandry, combined with adequate top-dressing as a first charge on revenue.

The grazier farmer cannot hope to do more than earn a livelihood under present conditions, and this is only possible by remitting rent charges to the fullest degree. At the same time, land should be fully utilized, and there are unfortunately quite a number of cases where this is not being carried out owing to indifferent farming methods in some cases and lack of capital in others, but nevertheless causing loss to the State as lessor and generally retarding the economic recovery of the Dominion.

Development loans, mostly on ploughable sections, have been granted in portions of the district where circumstances warrant. These loans are designed to assist hard-working, deserving settlers and have certainly achieved their object in assisting in the establishment of individuals on their sections.

WELLINGTON.

(H. W. C. MACKINTOSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

In a district such as Wellington, extending from Cape Palliser to Taumarunui, a distance of close on two hundred miles, it will be readily recognized that farming is carried on under varying conditions in which "climate" plays an important part, and the condition in which stock face the winter and come through to the spring is a telling factor in the farming industry.

In the main, climatic conditions during the year were inimical to farming interests. The winter was wet and cold, and stock generally came through to the spring in poor condition. The outlook gave promise of a good season in the spring, but in many parts a very dry summer militated against a favourable yield of primary products.

A most serious factor, at a time when wholesale prices for the chief primary products are still receding, has been the drought experienced in various parts of the land district. In parts of the Wairarapa the drought has been so severe that pastures have practically disappeared and the Department has had to come to the assistance of tenants with supplies of hay. In other parts settlers have been assisted to construct dams for the purpose of watering their farms.

Pastoral tenants secured a good average-weight clip, but had either to hold over their wool or accept a price that would not pay costs of production. Dairy-factory managers report that, where possible, sheep-farmers have been milking a few cows in an attempt to balance their budgets.

Dairy-farmers, although assured of better prices for their produce than the sheep-farmer, have had a lean year as far as markets are concerned. The pay-out has been round about 8d. and 10d., but with the bonus the pay-out for the season should be about 1s. for cheese factories, while it is probable that the pay-out for butter-factories will be round about 11d.