

HORTICULTURE DIVISION.

REPORT OF J. A. CAMPBELL, DIRECTOR.

THE FRUITGROWING INDUSTRY.

Following a heavy yield during the 1933-34 season, combined with a long spell of hot dry weather during the fruiting period, the present season's apple crop in the majority of the commercial fruitgrowing areas was on the light side. Pear and stone-fruit trees were not so materially affected by the dry conditions, and good average crops have been secured. The unusual weather experienced resulted in the crops maturing at least two or three weeks earlier than usual.

The season was very favourable to the development of insect pests, such as codlin moth, leaf-roller, red mite, &c., and demanded extra precautions being taken by growers in spraying operations. Showery weather in the early spring rendered the control of black spot somewhat difficult, and also was largely responsible for a considerable amount of russetting on the Delicious variety of apple. Fire-blight made very little headway during the year, any slight outbreaks being promptly dealt with, and the present position is satisfactory.

Although the fruit industry is passing through somewhat critical times, an improvement is noticeable in the returns to growers during the past year, and in some cases the results have been quite satisfactory. Unfortunately the improved conditions have not been general, and there is still evidence of enforced economy in the working of orchards which is leading to a falling-off in the general state of maintenance, and is no doubt having an influence on the incidence of disease and pests.

Citrus-fruit growing continues to make steady progress, and there has been a further increase in the area planted in lemons and to a lesser extent in Poorman oranges. The lemon crop has been a satisfactory one, and, while a gradual improvement is noticeable in the grading and quality of the fruit produced commercially, closer attention to disease control and the adoption of proper methods of curing are still desirable.

In order to deal with the increasing crops in the North Auckland District, an effort is being made to establish a central grading and packing shed at Kerikeri on a co-operative basis. This is a move in the right direction in order that a uniform grade of both lemons and oranges may be marketed. With additional trees coming into bearing, there will be a considerable increase in the quantity of fruit produced in the near future. It is estimated that during the current season the output of lemons and oranges in this locality will be 4,000 bushels and 2,000 bushels respectively. The manufacture of by-products from oversize and lower-grade fruit is receiving attention, and lemon-peel and lemon-juice are being produced in increasing quantities.

The passion-fruit crop at the commencement of the season promised to be a heavy one. As a result of inclement weather, however, leaf-spot developed to a large extent, causing considerable quantities of fruit to drop before reaching maturity. Growers have realized that it is necessary to prune the vines in order to spray them successfully for the control of leaf-spot. The extraction of passion-fruit juice is being carried out on a fairly comprehensive scale by the company operating at Kerikeri, North Auckland.

A matter of particular interest to fruitgrowers in the Hawke's Bay District is the establishment of a new cannery at Hastings, which has commenced operations in pulping and preserving fruit, and also the manufacture of jams and sauces.

The total area in commercial orchards in the Dominion stands at approximately 27,000 acres, any new plantings being offset by the cutting-out of certain areas which have proved unprofitable.

The revision of a number of the departmental bulletins and preparation of new ones has taken up a fair amount of time.

EXPORT OF FRUIT.

The export of fruit from the Dominion has reached considerable proportions in recent years. As the result of careful organization in the past, particularly in regard to export, New-Zealand-grown fruit has gained a very prominent position on the overseas markets, and every effort is being made to maintain the present high standard.

The 1934 crop of apples and pears being above the average, the export season for that year was a particularly busy one for all connected with the export of fruit, and the inspecting officers attached to the Division were kept fully engaged in the inspection of the various lines coming forward. Although it was found necessary to reject a fair quantity of fruit as being unsuitable for export on account of excess of blemish (russetting), slack packing, immaturity, &c., the work as a whole proceeded smoothly, the majority of growers adhering to the requirements of the export regulations.

The total quantity of fruit shipped overseas during the 1934 export season amounted to 1,574,912 cases, which shows an increase of 144,399 cases as compared with the previous year's figures. Of the total exported, 1,129,338 cases apples and 106,202 cases pears were consigned to Great Britain; 229,105 cases apples and 815 cases pears to the Continent of Europe; 51,369 cases apples to Canada; 19,086 cases pears to Sweden; and 38,897 cases apples to South America.

The bulk of the fruit was exported under the Government guarantee of 9s. 11d. per case for "extra fancy" and "fancy" grades, and 9s. 5d. per case for "good" grade in respect to certain varieties, and in regard to other varieties 9s. 5d. per case for "extra fancy" and "fancy" grades, and 8s. 11d. for "good" grade. The guarantee was also conditional on each exporter contributing