

NELSON.

(A. F. WATERS, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The season 1934-35 has been favourable for farming-operations. One heavy fall of snow at the end of June lay on the ground in the back country for about ten days, but, fortunately, without serious consequences. There were abundant warm spring rains which induced a plenteous and early growth, followed by a spell of fine weather to facilitate haymaking. Unfortunately, the early summer was particularly hot and dry, but the district was favoured again with warm autumn rains, with the result that most settlers have ample winter feed.

Wool prices have slumped again, but prices of store sheep and lambs have been quite satisfactory.

Butterfat-prices show very little improvement, which makes the position of the dairy-farmers very difficult.

Following a record season for apples, the quantity exported this year has fallen to almost a third of the preceding year. It was anticipated that there would be an off season following such a heavy crop, but not to the extent disclosed by later reports.

The season has been particularly favourable for tobacco-growing. The manufacturing companies have in many cases reduced their contract quantities, with the result that most growers have been able to fulfil their quotas with high-grade leaf.

Hop-growers have also had a favourable year, and practically all hops grown have been disposed of at remunerative prices.

MARLBOROUGH.

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

The year just closed has proved to be another very disappointing one from the point of view of the farming community. This district had suffered very severely owing to drought conditions during previous seasons, and, as the present year started off with a break in those conditions and as good rains, together with fairly mild conditions, were experienced right through winter and spring until early October, it was anticipated that a bumper season was on its way.

Dry and very hot conditions again set in, and the returns from most crops, especially on the lighter lands, will be much below anticipation. The wheat yield is expected to be 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. below normal, but peas show a decided improvement on the previous year. Rape and turnips were again very disappointing and were also considerably damaged by the diamond black moth. Grass and white-clover yields were below normal, and many rye-grass samples were poor in quality. Lucerne yields were particularly good this season.

In addition to its effects on crops, the prospects for any reserve of feed for the winter looked poor, but fortunately the dry spell broke in mid-March and, as the rains have continued and conditions have been mild, the grass and other feed has come away rapidly and the district can now face the winter with confidence.

The heavy drop in wool prices, combined with a lighter clip, has been disappointing and will be a serious setback to those who rely wholly on wool for their income. Farmers who had surplus sheep and lambs for disposal did not fare so badly, however, as these commanded reasonable prices and will help to bridge the gap caused by lower wool returns.

The dairy-farmer has been the most seriously affected through poor prices, and the dry summer also resulted in a decline in production.

The fruit season promised well in its early stages, but here again those who relied on natural moisture are faced with disappointment as a big percentage of the fruit is not up to export standard and it is anticipated that the total for export will only be about 46,000 cases.

Mention has been made in previous reports of the alarming increase in the rabbit pest. It is gratifying to be able to report that, owing to the efforts of the Agriculture Department's Stock Inspectors, several Rabbit Boards have been formed and have quickly grappled with the problem. Negotiations are at present under way for the formation of additional Rabbit Boards.

Generally speaking, the Crown tenants appear to be doing their utmost to meet present conditions.

WESTLAND.

(T. CAGNEY, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The low prices ruling for butterfat were again this year practically the only serious feature militating against what otherwise might have proved a very successful year. Favourable weather above the average was experienced with some intermittent long, dry spells, which, however, did not reach the stage of serious drought proportions owing to relief by timely rains.

A severe flood, with serious consequences to the farmers in the Arahura Valley, and to a lesser extent in the valleys of the Hokitika and Taramakau Rivers, was experienced towards the end of the period. The severity of the flood in the Arahura Valley resulted in some farmers losing most of their fences and pasture, with anything but a promising outlook for sufficient winter feed to carry their dairy herds through the winter.

A pleasing offset to the low prices for butterfat is the satisfactory prices received for lambs from this district at Canterbury markets. In many cases the prices realized topped the market, and settlers engaged in sheep or mixed farming may be expected to meet their year's land charges.

The year has been conducive to increased butterfat-production, and an increase in output may be expected accordingly. The output of beef in this district is steady and shows little variation from year to year, although ultimately the spread of deer will have a detrimental effect.

The introduction of the amending mining legislation of last year will call for increased supervision by this office in respect of damage done to Crown land by mining, and claims for such damage will receive periodical attention.

The total revenue for the period was £18,463. In addition, receipts from discharged-soldier settlements reached £7,581. Each of these amounts show a gratifying increase compared with those of last year.