

OTAGO.

(N. C. KENSINGTON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

For the year ending 31st March, 1936, the Crown tenants in the Otago Land District may be regarded as having experienced a satisfactory year. This comparison must be assessed in relation to the very difficult years following the 1930 season.

On the whole, climatic conditions were good, except that anxiety was caused through dry conditions in the spring in the North Otago District and a dry spell in South Otago till the middle of February. In North Otago welcome rain fell in the middle of October, and although the crops had received a severe check a quick recovery was made and a great growth resulted. The check received was reflected in the grain crops, and the returns per acre from wheat were only fair. As a result of broken weather during harvesting, a good area of wheat suffered in the field; but later reports showed that, following good winds, the grain had not suffered to a great extent. The pea crop has not been so fortunate, and suffered considerably.

In South Otago and Middlesmarch districts the rape and turnip crops suffered severely till the middle of February, when following good rain a remarkable recovery took place, and the general result in all parts of the districts is that ample turnip and other winter crops are now available; also a great growth of pasture.

In the high country pastoralists suffered no severe losses during the year, and the satisfactory price received for wool and surplus stock has been most encouraging.

Crown tenants on mixed-farming properties on the lower country have had the advantage of good average prices for fat and store lambs, and the fluctuation of market prices has not been so marked as in former years.

The dairy-farmer on the small holding and dependent on butterfat-prices has again had a difficult year. The price for butterfat certainly showed an advance on the previous season, but was not sufficient to meet the average overhead charges.

Reports from Central Otago show that the orchardists have had a fair year.

The rabbit pest has been a matter for grave concern in Central Otago and other parts of the district. The large increase can probably be explained by the limited amount of money available for rabbiting during the depression years, together with the low price offering for skins, also to the natural enemies, the stoat and the weasel, not being so plentiful as in former years. The price for skins has shown a rapid increase, and this factor should help to stay any further increase in the pest.

SOUTHLAND.

(T. CAGNEY, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Notwithstanding an unusually dry autumn and a resultant shortage of winter feed, the district generally enjoyed favourable weather conditions, and this feature, combined with the better prices ruling for sheep and wool, ensured, for sheep-farmers at least, a successful season.

High-country pastoralists experienced a good winter free of any serious snow losses of stock.

Owing to the dry weather experienced in the fall and the shortage of winter feed, dairy herds did not winter well and were generally late in coming into full profit. This setback was, however, to some extent offset by better dairy-farming conditions prevailing towards the end of the period, when timely rains brought on a good flush of feed, which should ensure an extension of the usual milking-season.

Sterility and abortion in herds still present a serious feature in dairy-farming, and, if anything, the spread of these contagious complaints appears to be increasing.

All classes of crops throughout the district have yielded well. Club root and parasitical diseases have not been so much in evidence as during last season, which is probably due to the drier weather conditions prevailing.

Rabbits are still very much in evidence, and, in a number of cases, the presence of this pest represents the difference between success and failure for farmers.

Conditions prevailing at the close of the period may be regarded as favourable, beneficial mild rains having brought on an excellent growth of grass with ample supplies of supplementary winter feed in sight.