

GISBORNE.

(H. L. PRIMROSE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

With wool-prices very substantially on the high side and stock prices very satisfactory, I have pleasure in reporting one of the best years for sheep-farmers for a long period.

Taken all through, the year has been a fairly wet one, and the summer months did not altogether live up to their reputation for lengthy spells of bright sunshine. Still, feed was very plentiful, and that is a big thing for the farming community generally.

As surmised last year, when high prices ruled for breeding ewes, most farmers who go in for the fat-lamb trade and have to buy in fresh ewes each year, found they had to pay very dearly for their requirements. The Waikato demand has been partly responsible for this, and the trade with that part continues to improve, approximately 350,000 sheep from this district finding a ready market there.

There seems to have been a tendency for more top-dressing of hill-country lands, and I expect that the wisdom of this course will be more fully appreciated in the next few years, especially if present prices continue. There is no doubt that in many instances that have come under my notice the policy has been a paying one.

A local industry that seems to be making quite good progress is the growing of lemons and sweet oranges. Evidence goes to show that the latter can be produced on a commercial scale. Our fertile loam soils produce big trees carrying heavy annual crops for which a ready market is found. Shipments of lemons increased by nearly 100 per cent, and over 2,926 cases were shipped last season. There is quite a good opening here for many Crown tenants with small areas of suitable soil.

Another feature is the steady improvement being effected on blackberry-infested country, principally as a result of the use of goats. This is very noticeable round about the Wairoa District.

In the coastal area north of Gisborne some parts of the country are suffering considerably from erosion during heavy rain. The area so affected is rather extensive, and it is a matter that must eventually affect valuations of properties. In such country the rainfall is very heavy, reaching up to 100 in. towards the main ridges in Matakaoa and Waipatu Counties.

Facial eczema was much less prevalent than in the two previous years, but has by no means died out yet.

Dairy-farmers have had plenty of feed, and butterfat returns have kept up for a longer period.

All through the year there has been quite a steady demand for medium-sized sheep-farms, and also for dairy-farms.

Generally, the prospects of the farming community in this district have not been so bright for years.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(F. R. BURNLEY, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Climatic conditions generally during the past season have been more favourable than usual, resulting in a plentiful supply of feed through the summer. Production on dairy-farms has consequently been maintained, and, with the welcome improvement shown in prices for wool and stock, sheep-farmers also have had a very successful year.

With a view to increasing the carrying capacity, farmers are still taking advantage of subsidies under unemployment-relief schemes, principally for the purpose of fencing, scrub-cutting, and draining.

Orchardists have had a disastrous season. Late frosts ruined portion of the crop and a hailstorm and frost in February did further damage. In some cases the whole crop was lost. This class of settler will again have difficulty in meeting charges.

The arrears position shows considerable improvement, partly due to concessions granted, but mainly owing to increased incomes.

The revenue for the year shows an increase of over £5,000 on the previous year.

TARANAKI.

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

The weather on the whole has not been so unfavourable for farming operations as in the previous year, although there were some unusual features. The autumn was good and there was plenty of feed to start the winter with. Cold conditions set in early in May, being ushered in by a very severe storm which, however, did not do a great deal of damage. The weather continued severe until July. An exceptionally mild August of springlike conditions followed, but again the winter reasserted itself, and unseasonable weather was the rule until well into the normal summer. Production of butterfat was well maintained over the year, and towards the close of the season showed an increase over the previous season's figures. With increased production and a guaranteed price, the average dairy-farmer is in a much better position than in any year since the slump, and in the majority of cases there should be no difficulty in meeting ordinary recurring payments.

The sheep-farmer has had a very good year. The wool clip was greater than for the previous year and, while the quality was much the same, there was less of the log-stained wool in evidence. The prices obtained were far above last year's figures. The lambing percentage was good, but there were heavy losses due to the rough weather, principally in the northern part of the district. The wild-pig trouble is still unabated, and until this menace can be controlled there will continue to be heavy losses of lambs.

During the year there were twenty-one selections of farms, totalling an area of 4,460 acres.

The revenue for the year was over £57,000, an increase of 13.4 per cent. on the previous year's figure. This is very satisfactory.