

SOUTHLAND.

(T. CAGNEY, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The district enjoyed a favourable autumn and mild winter with ample supplies of winter feed available for all classes of stock. The spring, however, was an unusually wet one, and this class of weather prevailed throughout the period, making the present season one of the wettest experienced for a considerable number of years.

Owing to the unsuitable climatic conditions sowings of root and green crops were late and growth was retarded by wet cold weather, with the result that the yields will be disappointing and farmers will have to depend mainly on hay for supplementary winter feed for stock. It is satisfactory to note that most farmers saved fair supplies of hay during suitable breaks in the weather. At the close of the period a strong flush of grass was noticeable throughout the district, and this will, to some extent, provide good grazing well into the winter.

Oat and other seed crops showed remarkable promise earlier in the season, but the weather seriously affected the successful harvesting of these and a considerable shortage in seed output may be expected.

Back-country runholders, in common with farmers on the lower levels, enjoyed a remarkably good winter. No serious snow loss of stock was reported. Lambs generally fattened reasonably well, but were retarded to some extent by the softness of the pasture.

Ragwort is still very much in evidence throughout the district. This weed thrives mainly on dairy-farms, but can be effectively controlled by running a few sheep with the dairy herd or, as an alternative, applying sodium chlorate, which may be used either as a powder or in a diluted form and may be procured at a reasonably cheap rate. An apathetic attitude is adopted by many farmers towards controlling this pest.

Notwithstanding good prices for rabbit-skins of late, the rabbit nuisance is still much in evidence.

With favourable prices ruling throughout the season, particularly for wool and sheep, a generally buoyant tone is the natural result, and farmers, notwithstanding weather drawbacks, have enjoyed a lucrative year.