

On account of the ragwort menace it was necessary to resort to heavy culling and reduce the numbers of dairy cows. Extra sheep were purchased, and the scheme is now carrying 4,800 breeding-ewes, an increase of approximately 1,400 over the past year. Despite the big reduction in dairy cows, the butterfat production for this settlement only dropped 2 per cent. It is anticipated that, as the ragwort becomes diminished, the dairy herds will be gradually increased to the former capacity of the properties, but at present the scheme is only carrying 453 dairy stock in addition to the sheep.

The prospects for the future are bright, and with the closer supervision now possible, the success of the scheme appears to be assured.

Manunui.

This scheme of 21,214 acres, constitutes by far the largest area in this district brought under the provisions of Part I of the Native Land Amendment Act, 1936. It is situated on the eastern side of the Main Trunk Railway, commencing at Manunui, about four miles south of Taumarunui, thence running easterly for upwards of seventeen miles. A very large area is still under bush, although portions have been milled and have reverted to second-growth. There are large areas of flat to rolling country, with some hilly country, but, with the exception of a few acres of steep rough faces, the whole block is suitable for development. If labour is available, it is proposed to clear up to 1,000 acres each year and stock with sheep and cattle. Some of the settlers had cleared portions of their sections prior to coming under the State scheme, but in many cases their efforts had not been a success, and a considerable amount of cleaning up is necessary.

During the year 777 acres of bush were felled, but, with the larger number of workers now available, future clearing works will be accelerated. Twenty huts have been erected, and are now occupied by workers and their families. It was found necessary owing to shortage of labour locally, to transfer workers from other areas where sufficient work was not offering, and these men are now settled in their new homes and are quite happy. An adequate water-supply has been installed—the settlement is within a few yards of a school—and generally the living conditions are quite satisfactory.

Live-stock as at 31st March comprised 120 dairy cows, 65 other dairy stock, 103 run cattle, 1,786 ewes, 40 rams, and 10 horses. These figures will be heavily increased during the coming year.

There are 10 settlers established, and 75 workmen employed, dependent upon all of whom are 264 persons.

Patea.

Gazetted for development on 30th September, 1937, this property is situated three miles from Patea, and comprises a total area of 36 acres. The whole area is easy rolling country, all ploughable, and is in good pasture except for about 1 acre of gorse and second-growth. The occupier is established as a dairy-farmer, and the scheme supports a family of six persons. Work on fence repairs and additions to the dwelling have not yet been commenced, but will be attended to in the near future.

The live-stock as at 31st March comprised 38 dairy cows, 8 other dairy stock, and 3 horses.

This property is an excellent one, and, as it is anticipated that the settler will acquire further land adjoining, the holding should develop into a really good farm.

Pihama.

Situated about eight miles from Opunake Railway-station, and comprising a total area of 600 acres, this scheme is practically flat, with good fertile soil, and comprises some of the best land in the district. The owner is a recognized chieftainess in the Taranaki District. She had become perturbed at the inroads which gorse and fern had made on the property owing to the neglect of share-milkers, and realized that the developmental policy provided the quickest and most economical method of combating this growth and of completing the settlement of the whole area. It is intended to divide the section into four separate holdings, and pending the selection of these settlers, and various other matters, no work has yet been commenced. The scheme was only gazetted under the Act on 23rd March, 1938.

Opunake.

This scheme is situated three miles from Opunake, adjoining the Waiteika railway-siding, and comprises a total area of 158 acres, which is practically all flat, with several small hillocks. Except for about 10 acres of waste land along the Waiteika Stream, the whole block is ploughable. Gravel is plentiful in this stream, and has been used for the making of a number of concrete posts. There is one settler established as a dairy-farmer, and he supports three adults. Although he is an old man, he is assisted by his son and grandson, and they are making a success of the farm. The liabilities were heavy when the section was handed to the Department for development, but these are being reduced, while there is ample margin of security.

The work carried out by the settler and eight additional labourers embraced 32 acres of clearing, 77 chains of fencing, 12 acres of cultivation: and an implement-shed was built.

Live-stock as at 31st March comprised 41 dairy cows, 15 other dairy stock, and 4 horses.

The settler has a new house, and the living conditions are very satisfactory. He was the first Native in the Taranaki Province to place his lands under the control of the State.