

Manukau Farm.

This area fronts the main Kaitiā—Herekino Road, and comprises an area of 830 acres of easy to steep clay loam country. The front portion of the property has been worked and cultivated, and an area of 400 acres of good pasture is now consolidated and fully subdivided preparatory to the establishment of settlers. The balance of the area at the back of the farm is in good puriri and taraire bush. This year 70 acres have already been sown down, and 30 acres are ready for sowing. A general clearing up on 100 acres of grass, and the clearing and stumping of 200 acres on grassed land to facilitate the use of the mower next season, has been completed. All old drains have been cleaned out, and 300 chains of new drains constructed. The erection of 676 chains of new fences and the repair of 675 chains of existing fences have also been carried out. A road connecting up the bush portion with the front of the property has been formed.

The stock on hand at 31st March, 1938, comprised 147 head of run cattle, a team of working-bullocks, and 102 sheep. The stock are in excellent condition. Pastures have been top-dressed and are in good heart for the coming winter. Approval has been granted for the erection of six houses for tentative settlers, and these will be commenced at an early date.

Motatau Farm.

Motatau, comprising 770 acres, was acquired for base-farm purposes, and as such served a useful purpose in the early stages of land development in the district. Now that the various district schemes are in a position to carry their own stock, the necessity for a base farm is not so great, and this area has gradually developed into an ordinary mixed farm. It contains some excellent flats, but the hills are poor. Management is difficult, as the flats are subject to flooding, which cannot be overcome without a comprehensive and costly district drainage system.

During the year 53 chains of roadways were formed and metalled, 50 chains of fencing erected, in addition to the usual farm maintenance and repair works. The dairy herd came under test this year. There has been an abundance of feed on the dairying lands, but the hill pasture is disappointing.

Stock on the property comprises 70 dairy cows, 45 other dairy stock, 40 run cattle, 114 breeding-ewes, and 142 dry sheep.

Ngataki.

An area of vacant Crown lands between Te Kao and Houhora, in the far North, was made available by the Lands Department for the settlement of Natives from Te Hapua, and development work has been started on an area of 2,700 acres. The soil of the block is of a sandy nature on a soft sandstone base and can be worked at any time of the year with implements. Scattered throughout the area are numerous small swamps of sandy peat which appear to be drainable. Parts of the area are affected with small sand-drifts which will require to be reclaimed. The country in the locality has for years past been periodically burnt off by gum-diggers, and, though this has undoubtedly detrimentally affected the fertility of the soil, it is considered that with proper cultivation and the application of fertilizers results can be obtained which will justify its development. It was anticipated that 100 acres could be grassed in the autumn, but owing to the delay in the supply of materials for the hutments it was not possible to get the workmen established in time to undertake the work. However, an area of 15 acres has been ploughed and is ready for grassing.

The work completed to date includes the erection of twelve hutments, the clearing of 20 acres, the ploughing of 15 acres, and the construction of 40 chains of drain. A start has been made with the fencing of the block, six thousand posts having been obtained from the Mangatete bush for this purpose.

Okaroro Farm.

This area of Native land, comprising Sections 39 and 60, Motatau No. 2 Block—1,760 acres—is situated just south of the Otiria Railway-station. It was leased to Europeans, but was recently abandoned to the mortgagees—the State Advances Corporation—from whom it has now been acquired by the Board of Native Affairs for Native settlement.

There is a substantial homestead on the property, and practically the whole area has been in grass, though it is now much deteriorated and infested with scrub and blackberry. The front portion of the property, originally in bush, is good-quality hill limestone country, and this is in good grass. The balance of the area is easy ploughable country running from medium quality clay to hard clay gumfields. Here the pastures are much deteriorated and will require renewing. The fencing has been neglected and is in poor order.

Development work commenced in October, and has been confined to repairing fences, erecting sheep-yards, draining and roading, and the constructing of stock-crossings over creeks and drains. There is ample scope for labour, and the programme will depend on the man-power available.

Stock now on the property comprises 443 run cattle, 587 breeding-ewes, and 420 dry sheep.

Opapaki Farm.

This farm comprises the following areas : Motatau No. 2, Section 48B, 516 acres ; Motatau No. 2, Section 49A 2, 252 acres ; Motatau No. 2, Section 49A 3, 117 acres ; total, 885 acres.

Sections 48B and 49A 2 were mortgaged to the Maori Land Board to secure advances, and by arrangement with the mortgagor, who was in arrears with interest payments, these sections, together with section 49A 3, were taken over by the Board of Native Affairs on 29th November last for development.