

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(L. J. POFF, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past year has not proved as favourable as the two preceding years as regards butterfat production in the North Auckland District, this position being largely due to the abnormal seasons prevailing. The autumn and winter seasons were mild, with good growth of pastures, with the result that stock came through the winter quite well.

Unfortunately a cold spring was experienced, with a heavy rainfall, and the pastures failed to make any real satisfactory growth.

This season was followed by a long dry summer spell, which rapidly dried up the pasture, providing a very poor return of hay and causing a heavy reduction in butterfat, which up to the end of December last had been well maintained on comparison with the previous year.

But for the fact that the guaranteed price for butterfat had been increased for the 1938-39 season, many dairy-farmers in the north would have experienced a serious set-back financially.

During the autumn of 1938 a serious outbreak of facial eczema in sheep and cattle resulted in heavy stock losses, and although it is not anticipated that there will be any serious repetition of this disease during the present autumn, nevertheless the low lambing percentage experienced in the north during the past year has been largely attributed to ewes affected by eczema.

Many farmers who have maintained a lambing percentage between 80 per cent. and 90 per cent. now report an average of 60 per cent. for the past season.

The extremely dry autumn of the present year has seriously affected the sale of store cattle and forced some farmers to sell at low prices.

No large blocks of Crown land have been opened during the year. The selections cover a total area of 4,793 acres, comprising areas which have been previously opened for selection or which had been reoffered.

Revenue collected during the year was slightly in excess of that of the previous year.

The continued policy of the Land-development Board of assisting individual tenants with finance for further development of their Crown holdings is proving very helpful and creating marked progress in development.

During the year all applications filed under the Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act, 1936, not previously dealt with by Adjustment Commissions have now been adjudicated upon, and there now remain only a small number of cases which require to be reviewed by the Court of Review.

AUCKLAND.

(K. M. GRAHAM, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past year has been a difficult one for the farming community, mainly due to the vagaries of the weather.

A cold spring, during which there was little growth of feed, was followed by a prolonged dry spell with the result that production did not come up to expectation. Difficulty has been experienced in saving a sufficient quantity of hay for winter feeding, and in some cases a good proportion of what was saved has had to be fed out to sustain production over the latter months of the season.

As a result of the prolonged dry weather the usual autumn top-dressing has been somewhat delayed and many settlers will be faced with the difficulty of obtaining winter grazing.

The actual returns from butterfat have generally been maintained, mainly as a result of the increased guaranteed price, and in general Crown tenants have met their obligations to the Department.

The relief granted under the Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act, 1936, has put many of the lessees in a better position than they have been in for some years past, and Crown tenants should now be able, in addition to meeting their charges, to provide a reserve fund to tide them over an occasional bad season.

GISBORNE.

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

At the beginning of the year under review the whole district was experiencing the effects of the heavy February floods, and it was very unfortunate for the settlers to receive a further set-back by the floods at the end of April. These floods had the effect of silting over large areas of pastures on the flats, with the result that dairy herds had to be grazed out. Consequent on the heavy rainfall following a dry summer there was a sudden rush of feed, resulting in facial eczema being very prevalent during the late autumn. The winter was very wet and was followed by a wet spring. The hot winds of the early summer months had the effect of hardening the saturated soil, which hindered the ploughing for the maize crops. The summer has been exceptionally dry, well below the average for the past sixty years, resulting in a scarcity of feed.