

Wool-prices remain at a low level. There was a poor demand for store sheep and cattle last autumn as the facial eczema epidemic thoroughly disorganized the stock market. This year the fat-stock market seems to be upset owing to widespread drought conditions.

Reports show that ragwort is being effectively controlled on the better-class land, but is seeding freely on much neglected hill country.

The adjustments under the Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act, 1936, were completed during the year, and as over four hundred Crown lessees in this district were dealt with it should place most of them on a sound basis.

WELLINGTON.

(H. W. C. MACKINTOSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Weather conditions throughout the year have been disappointing. The autumn and winter of 1938 were fairly mild, and stock came through to the spring in good condition. The spring and early summer proved very wet and cold, however, and this, combined with heavy winds, kept the grass back. Farmers were late in harvesting hay crops owing to wet conditions, and much of the hay saved lacked brightness. In contrast to the wetness of the early summer, the late summer and early autumn were hot and dry. The white butterfly and diamond-back moth have not been about in such numbers, and cruciferous crops have not suffered to the extent they did in late years.

Prices for cattle have been maintained, but sheep-prices, owing to the recent dry spell, show a sharp drop; in some districts ewes were approximately 10s. and lambs 3s. to 4s. below last season's values. Prices for dairy stock remain steady.

Each year an increasing area is being treated with manures, as farmers recognize more and more the value of top-dressing. It is being realized that, if pastures are to be maintained and deterioration arrested, especially on hill country, it is essential that top-dressing be resorted to. Considerable use is being made by farmers of the Unemployment Relief Scheme 4B, more especially in the northern areas of the land district. Many farms have been restored to profit by means of this scheme which, on account of lack of means of their owners, were in danger of becoming uneconomic units. Contracts under the scheme require skilled labour, and if such were more easily available it would be used more extensively.

Eight hundred and fifty lessees and licensees applied under the Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act, 1936, to have their liabilities adjusted. Of these, 53 withdrew their applications for various reasons, leaving 797 cases to be dealt with by the Adjustment Commissions. With the exception of about 35 cases, this important work has been finalized. It is too early yet for an opinion to be formed of the effect of the adjustments, but as, in most cases, tenants have received concessions one way or another they should now be in a position to establish themselves successfully, more especially those who follow dairying for a livelihood.

Settlers in the most northern portions of the district still suffer losses amongst their sheep from depredations by pigs, in spite of strenuous efforts made to combat the pest. The pigs do most damage at nights, and as they have plenty of cover it is a difficult matter to try and exterminate them.

There is still a keen demand for land, and any areas offered that show a likelihood of a fair living are keenly sought after.

NELSON.

(P. R. WILKINSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The yearly period under review has been most disappointing for most classes of farming, and as a result returns are likely to be smaller than in previous years.

The spring and early summer were wet and cold for the most part, while high winds up until towards the end of January made farming-conditions rather difficult and disappointing. From towards the end of January to the close of the period a very exceptional dry spell was experienced. Dairy returns fell considerably, while pastures generally presented a burnt-up appearance. Orchardists will no doubt suffer considerably as a result of the unsatisfactory weather conditions experienced during the growing season, the fruit failing to mature correctly, resulting in much diminished output of export varieties. Tobacco and hop crops are likely to be light. Sheep-farmers suffered considerably, and stock will enter the winter months in low condition generally.

The revenue for the past year shows an improvement on the previous year of approximately 14 per cent.

MARLBOROUGH.

(G. I. MARTIN, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past year has been a very disappointing one for all classes of farmers in this district.

Generally speaking, stock wintered well and there was an abundance of feed in spring and early summer.

However, drought conditions set in towards the end of December, and since then there have been only a few points of rain. An unusual feature of the present prolonged drought has been its extension to the Rai and Sounds portion of the district, which usually are more favourably situated as regards rainfall than the balance of Marlborough.

The abnormally dry conditions have resulted in an epidemic of fires which have destroyed many hundreds of acres of valuable scenic and protected forests in the northern part of the district.