

The results from dairying have this season been most gratifying, and despite the good season there is every reason to place a lot of the credit to the bonus system of payment. Despite some uncertainty in respect to the killing of pigs for export, the results this season are the highest ever attained by this branch.

During the year seventeen more settlers were established on the Waikato blocks in accordance with the agreement entered into with the Waikato Land Settlement Society, and the results attained by these and the other ten settlers who were already established when the Department assumed control have been very fair indeed.

Several properties have been inspected with a view to purchase for soldier settlement, but no further action has been taken meanwhile.

A gradual reduction in the number of men employed on development has taken place throughout the year. At one stage a large number of men were permanently released so that they could assist private farmers, and service in the armed forces has constituted another quite substantial drain.

Despite this, a great deal of useful development work has been carried out, with the result that 5,000 acres of additional grass has been established. Incidental to this, fencing of the grassed areas has proceeded normally, while other men have been engaged on stumping, cultivation for winter feed, draining of swamps, &c.

The first step in a gradual increase of breeding-stock was made this season by increasing our ewes from 20,000 to 30,000 and our breeding cows from 1,500 to over 2,000. There was also an increase in our dairy herds from 500 to 700. Despite a preponderance of young sheep and the alienation of further areas at Kairangi and Karakariki, the wool-clip for this year was 649,549 lb., as against 507,179 lb. the previous season, while production of butterfat has shown an increase of 64,517 lb. over the previous year.

ARIA BLOCK (413 ACRES).

Two adjoining blocks viz., Jacobs' (250 acres) and Nicol's (163 acres)—were amalgamated to form this block. When taken over both sections were rapidly reverting and heavily infested with ragwort and blackberry. Clearing the second growth and blackberry was followed by grassing and stocking with dry sheep and cattle to regain control.

This last year the opening-up of swampy areas and the further control of weeds by closer fencing, manure, and stocking has allowed a ewe flock to be established and also a herd of run cows. Work is practically completed, though control of blackberry will have to be carefully watched for some time to come, while drains will require to be lowered as the swamp areas consolidate. Future prospects are bright, as the land is of good quality and the block is handily situated to Aria Township.

AROHENA BLOCK (3,987 ACRES).

This block is made up of thirteen separate properties all of which were at one time farmed but abandoned as hopeless. These properties were Anderson's (383 acres), Broome's (211 acres), Dewson's (288 acres), Gifford's (261 acres), Dollimore's (474 acres), Scherer's (445 acres), Prendergast's (323 acres), Stephen's (365 acres), Thorley's (144 acres), Flanagan's (418 acres), Spence's (171 acres), Dormer's (340 acres), and Flett's (163 acres). Practically the whole area embraces "sick" country heavily infested with ragwort. The work carried out in the early stages of development consisted chiefly of stumping to allow room for the sowing of winter crops and the replacement of all existing fences with sheep-proof ones so that control of ragwort could be exercised. With the exception of one small flock of ewes established for the purpose of experiment in overcoming "sickness" by the use of licks, the whole area was grazed with wethers along with a few control cattle. The results show that this country can be handled and the ragwort and sickness kept under control. This season the ewe flock has been increased and more breeding cattle carried. Old pastures where ragwort has been controlled have been renovated, and areas reverted to scrub are now being opened up and grassed. Wool-sheds, dips, yards, and other facilities required in handling the area have now been established, while the old cottages and farmhouses have been made habitable for the wives and families of married workmen.

BAIN'S BLOCK (169 ACRES).

The occupier of this block had been assisted in many ways prior to 1936, when control was transferred to the Land Development Branch at Te Kuiti. Development work is now practically completed, and the area will winter this year 350 ewes, 120 ewe lambs, and a breeding herd of 33 polled Angus cows.

BENTON'S BLOCK (1,013 ACRES).

This section, situated as it is at 1,500 ft. above sea-level in a heavy-rainfall district, is not one holding out any great prospects for the future. No attempt has been made to further extend development this season, and work has been limited to some squaring up of existing clearings and fences. About 300 acres out of the total area is available for grazing, and this winters approximately 500 ewes and 200 dry sheep, while control cattle are made available when required.

BURN'S BLOCK (139 ACRES).

Situated in the Te Rau-a-Moa district, 1,500 ft. above sea-level, this Block, like Benton's, was brought under control of the Land Development Branch when it was found that the occupier was in a hopeless position. The property then carried 10 cows and 150 ewes and was heavily infested with ragwort, while the grass was either very poor or wholly reverted. Work has consisted of stumping ground for crops, further clearing, and renovation of pastures, while, in addition, repairs have been effected to all fences and additional fences erected. To-day the block will winter 300 breeding-ewes, 80 ewe lambs for replacements, and 40 breeding-cows. With further control of ragwort the block shows that, though prospects are limited, there is no reason why it cannot be farmed successfully.