

NELSON

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

Although the past winter was a reasonably mild one, a long dry spell during the summer months resulted in a drought which dispelled any possibility of a peak production season. Crops suffered mostly. Hops were very light generally, and the production thereof will show a marked decline. The dry spell also seriously affected tobacco crops, and an early frost completed the damage. I anticipate production will be down considerably. Exceptionally good growing weather in the latter part of the season should help dairy production considerably. Wool-production should be maintained, if not increased.

Crown tenants are meeting their annual charges in a satisfactory manner.

MARLBOROUGH

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

Conditions were not of the best for the farming community in this district during the past season. The autumn was dry, and good rains did not come until June, and winter feed was short. A cold winter with several fairly heavy falls of snow in the high country was followed by an exceedingly wet spring, and this was succeeded by very dry conditions from early December to mid-February.

The unfavourable conditions were reflected in reduced lambing percentages and lighter wool-clips. Autumn-sown crops in the heavier land were affected by the wet winter and spring, but those on the lighter areas were satisfactory. Spring crops were late in the ground, and yields were poor as a result of the dry conditions from early December onwards. Small-seed crops, lucerne, and subterranean clover, however, have done exceptionally well.

The dairymen's returns also showed the results of the unfavourable conditions, and some of the factories show reductions ranging from 7 per cent. to 15 per cent., principally due to the dry conditions.

The orchardists enjoyed a general increase in the quality and weight of fruit this season.

Many of the more settled areas in Marlborough are free of rabbits, but those localities previously infested show a general increase due to the shortage of sufficient labour.

WESTLAND

(B. KING, Commissioner of Crown Lands)

Over the last year weather conditions have been remarkably good for farming operations. A mild winter followed by a spring and summer both exceptionally dry and warm resulted in good lambing percentages and few losses, and with prices for fat and forward stock maintaining a high level the farming industry must be accounted as having experienced a very profitable year.

There have been no major floods sufficient to cause much damage to pasture lands, though the question of erosion of the best alluvial country is one of sufficient importance to warrant attention being drawn to the need for planning effective preventive measures on a large scale.

The cumulative effect of the present haphazard methods of flood control and prevention of erosion is a major problem in a district which must eventually consider farming as one of its most important industries.

The shortage of labour for farm-work, combined with the high wages obtainable in alternative means of livelihood, has had the effect of Crown tenants neglecting to some extent the maintenance of their properties, which are in many cases showing the effect in excessive growth of noxious weeds and scrub, and consequently lowered productive capacity.

CANTERBURY

(N. C. KENSINGTON, Commissioner of Crown Lands)

Crown tenants in this district have not had a good year, and the general conditions as regards the high and low country have been difficult. A very dry autumn was followed by a winter with several heavy falls of snow which extended over the whole district, but were particularly heavy on the plains of Mid-Canterbury. It is too early yet to estimate the full result of these snowstorms on the yearly revenue of tenants, but reports show that lambing is fully 20 per cent. lower, and indicate a lower return in the wool-clip. Few surplus sheep from high-country runs are offering, but any that are available are being purchased at good prices. Generally, it can be expected that high-country flocks will not be up to full strength.

The general outlook so far as high-country runs are concerned is not encouraging; difficulty is experienced in securing suitable musterers, packmen, &c., and the outlook for maintaining a full production of wool and surplus stock from runs is one for concern.

The lessees of settlement lands have only had a fair year so far as returns are concerned, although prices generally have been good.