

EXTENSION DIVISION

REPORT OF P. W. SMALLFIELD, DIRECTOR

During the past year all officers of the Division have had to work at high pressure to meet increasing demands for instructional, investigational, certification, and testing services. The results and methods of extension work are being reviewed and the Division has initiated a number of land-utilization and farm-management studies so that extension methods for raising farm production and efficiency on a district basis may be investigated and compared with the Division's traditional system of general instruction. Malvern County has been surveyed to investigate problems involved in a wider use of subterranean clover on light land in Canterbury; Akitio County farms have been studied to define methods and costs involved in North Island hill-country improvement; and in Franklin and Manukau Counties surveys have been carried out to review the problems of securing increased production on hill-country and ploughable land. On the initiative of (and in co-operation with) Federated Farmers the Division is investigating a plan for organized farm improvement in the Waikato. The plan aims to help selected groups of farmers to put into operation as quickly and economically as possible the latest knowledge on dairy-farm management.

These projects in land utilization, land improvement, and farm management have the object of confining extension work to limited areas and limited objects and should give tangible results fairly quickly in the areas chosen for the initial work. This approach to extension work has much to commend it, but it demands the services of specially trained men and can be extended only as staff becomes available.

THE 1949-50 SEASON

Weather

Auckland Province.—The autumn and winter of 1949 were mild and were followed by a very favourable spring. Good weather continued until mid-December, when dry conditions set in, especially in North Auckland, where a major drought was experienced.

Wellington.—Throughout the southern half of the North Island climatic conditions were exceptionally favourable for all types of farming. The late autumn and winter were mild with no severe storms. The spring was early with good growth, except in coastal Hawke's Bay, where the rainfall was below average. The summer generally was very favourable to pastures and crops, with a plentiful rainfall and good harvest conditions, apart from districts in southern Hawke's Bay, where dry conditions continued from spring until late summer.

Canterbury.—The winter was mild and dry in most parts of Canterbury. North Canterbury experienced a dry spring and summer with some late frosts followed by good autumn rains. In Mid-Canterbury and South Canterbury dry conditions were alleviated by good rains from late November onwards, resulting in showery harvest conditions.

In Westland the season was wet and cold until January; since then it has been dry. Nelson had an excellent season with a high total of sunshine and good rainfall until late summer. Marlborough after a good winter experienced a severe drought.

Otago-Southland.—The winter was generally mild and dry except in Western Southland, where the rainfall was fairly high, and in South Otago, which experienced a very severe snowstorm, causing stock losses, in September. Cold weather prevailed in early spring with some late frosts. The early summer was dry, especially in North Otago and parts of Central Otago; late frosts in November in some districts caused damage to crops and retarded pasture growth. Good rains in December brought much relief to most districts and since that period rains were generally ample for crops and pastures.