

Pastures

In the North Island pasture growth was exceptionally good during autumn and early winter.

Because the very mild winter in the Auckland Province resulted in excellent winter and early-spring growth, dairy herds did not suffer from the usual September feed shortage and there was a considerable increase in the practice of using winter-saved grass for spring feed.

As a result of dry summer conditions, especially in North Auckland, pasture production suffered considerably towards the close of the season.

All districts in the southern half of the North Island experienced early spring growth, and though growth was checked in September and October, good rains in November resulted in prolific growth with ample surpluses for hay and silage.

Pasture renewal by ploughing and resowing has increased considerably throughout the North Island. The use of giant disks on steeper country is developing satisfactorily, and there is also much activity in the breaking-in of coastal sand country and in the development of river-flats.

In Canterbury pasture growth was poor in spring and early summer, but there was a timely recovery following rains in November and December and autumn growth was particularly good.

In Westland pasture growth was poor throughout the season; Nelson experienced good growth; in Marlborough good winter growth was followed by drought conditions in summer, and pastures dried up until late autumn.

Mild conditions during winter and early spring favoured pasture growth in Otago. Dry weather followed and summer growth was poor especially in North Otago, where the feed position became critical. Pastures in all districts recovered after rain in December.

In Southland no usual flush of growth was experienced in November and December. Dry conditions continued during January and February and it was only in March that pasture growth became normal.

Supplementary Fodder

Hay and Silage.—The favourable spring weather caused a general increase in the amounts of hay and silage made in the North Island. A large proportion of the hay crop is now baled with the use of the pick-up baler, and contract haymaking is increasing. Weather conditions were favourable for haymaking in the north, resulting in good-quality hay being made. There was also a noticeable increase in the amount of silage made in most dairying districts. In the South Island the quantities of hay and silage saved varied from district to district.

Lucerne.—The area in lucerne continues to increase in the South Island, especially in Canterbury and Marlborough, although established stands in those districts did not contribute their usual quantities last season. In Central Otago, on the other hand, large crops of lucerne hay were harvested.

Swedes and Turnips.—There has been a slight increase in the acreage of swedes and turnips in the North Island, where crops were fairly normal, except in North Auckland. Crops generally in that district suffered from dry conditions. In the South Island average crops were reported, except in Mid-Canterbury, where insect damage, particularly from diamond-backed moth, was severe, and in Otago and Southland, where club root and dry rot reduced yields.

Rape and Chou Moellier.—Rape is a fairly important crop in Central Hawke's Bay and parts of Wairarapa where pastures dry out early and this season the crop has done well. The Canterbury rape crops were affected by insect damage, except in South Canterbury, where the yields were normal. In Otago and Southland rape continues to be the most important lamb-fattening feed; fairly large crops were sown, and yields were good.