

*Awakino.*

With the exception of those at the kaingas between Mokau Heads and Awakino Heads, the potato-crops have been almost entirely destroyed by the blight.

*Waitomo.*

The potato-crop is an utter failure. The maize-crop has been destroyed by frost.

*Taupo.*

The potatoes were all blighted.

*Bay of Plenty.*

The potato-blight has been very general and destructive throughout the Counties of Tauranga, Whakatane, Rotorua, and Opotiki, with the exception of Motiti Island, which is the only place that has not been affected. The early crops at Matata escaped, and the main crop was only slightly damaged. With the exception of these two places, all the reports are unfavourable.

The maize-crop, with the exception of Motiti Island and a few small patches near the coast on the mainland, has been very much damaged by frost, and in some places completely destroyed.

The kumara-plantations have also suffered through the frost, and in some cases from what appeared to be potato-blight.

*Cook County.*

The potato-blight commenced about the middle of December, and lasted till the end of January, and it destroyed almost the whole of the Maori potato-crops; a few Natives that cultivated little early plots near the sea-coast beyond the reach of frost in the months of June and July saved their crops.

From information gathered, potatoes planted in light loamy soil did not suffer so badly as potatoes planted in heavy soil; the middle and late crops planted in the month of August and September were almost totally lost, except three or four bags to the acre, which the Natives in many cases are saving for next planting-season.

The Natives on the whole have not sufficient potatoes to last them through the year—in fact, some families are in a bad plight and depending on their neighbours at present. I observed during my round through the district the newer varieties—British Queen, Northern Star, and Up to Date—were some of the varieties which the blight did not affect so badly as the other sorts. I regret to state, however, that very few Natives got the opportunity of obtaining any of the said varieties owing to the scarcity of seed and high prices ruling at the time—£1 15s. to £2 per sack. The Natives planted the old varieties, which all perished under the blight.

I may state that only for the kumara the Natives would certainly starve, but with respect to the kumara I may state that owing to the extra labour in cultivating the same the Natives do not till it to any great extent; but one feature about the kumara is that it is blight-proof, owing, I presume, to the fact that it is grown from the shoots or plants of the tuber each year.

You will wonder at the small area of potatoes grown in the district by the Natives, but seed-potatoes were so expensive they could not afford to buy any, and they lost nearly all their potatoes the previous season, so had none for seed.

As far as I know, the Natives took no particular precaution to stay or check the ravages of the blight by spraying, &c.; in two or three cases the Natives took the precaution to cut and pull the tops off the potatoes when the blight first appeared, with the result that they saved their crops.

Two crops in particular I know of personally—one owner, Honiana Tautau, cut the tops off his crop and saved the whole; the other, Wi Konohi, whose land adjoins, acting under advice, left his tops on and lost the whole.

I understand that if the tops are cut or pulled at the first signs of blight it arrests further progress, because the blight seems to feed and work down to the tubers through the stems. With regard to checking blight by spraying with chemicals, I doubt the effect and good of it. In my opinion new seeds and rebuilding the constitution of the old varieties in some way is the only preventive and the only means of killing the blight.

I may draw your attention to our own crop at Wainui: On two acres, acting under advice, we left the tops on, and the result was that we lost the whole except three sacks.

The seed-potatoes distributed to the Natives by the Government were of the old varieties—Derwents, I believe—and were subject to the blight. I would recommend any further aid in this direction to be by the distribution of the newer kinds—Up to Date, &c.

In my opinion, and that of the old Natives of this county, the blight is entirely a foreign parasite or disease brought to the colony from abroad, or bred in the colony through the constant use of old varieties of potatoes.

In the history of this county no blight or anything of the kind was ever previously known either to Europeans or Maoris.

*Waipatu County.*

The potato-blight first made itself felt in this district last year, when several potato-plantations were destroyed; but this season the blight has been very severe, having completely destroyed more than three parts of the potato-crop of the whole district, causing much distress among a certain portion of the Natives.

The Maoris maintain that there are two kinds of blight that affect the potato, and that they know the cause of both, but do not know how to remedy the evil. The less severe of the two is caused, they say, by a moth, that although small, is very strong and active; this moth alights in millions at night on the potato-plants, laying eggs on the underside of the leaf: one warm day is