

SOUTHLAND.

(THOMAS BROOK, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Twelve months ago there was much anxiety in Southland owing to the failure of the turnip crop, but an open winter enabled farmers to carry on with little loss of stock. The season now drawing to a close has not been a particularly good one for dairying, the output having been materially affected by the cold winds and rain which prevailed from early spring until the middle of December. The turnip crop for the coming winter gave early promise of a record yield, and although a period of drought caused a partial failure in some of the drier parts there has been a good recovery and the yield in most parts of the district will be fair. Stock generally are in good condition to face the winter. Grain crops were short in the straw but well filled, and grass-seed has yielded exceptionally well.

Draught horses are in good demand at greatly increased prices, and this indicates that a considerable area of land will be brought under cultivation during the coming season.

Rabbits are still numerous in most parts of the district, notwithstanding the war waged upon them while skins were in demand at high prices. The weight of opinion appears to be in favour of systematic poisoning as being the only effective remedy for this pest.

The Southland electrification scheme is now under way. The poll authorizing the raising of a loan was carried by a very large majority, and the Power Board has already commenced the work of development. The aim and object is to bring the current into every settled locality and to offer every facility for farmers to employ it in their homes and on their farms. It will undoubtedly play a very important part in the future development of Southland.

APPENDIX II.—LANDS FOR SETTLEMENT.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

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

There have been twenty-two estates acquired in this district under the Lands for Settlement Act, comprising an area of 31,856 acres subdivided into 898 sections. Of these the Waimata, Remuera, Te Pua, and Pukete Settlements were disposed of during the year to discharged soldiers. Each of these settlements gives indications of being highly successful. The soldiers are putting considerable energy into their work and will surely make good.

The matter of providing satisfactory road access to the recent settlements has not been lost sight of, but, owing to the difficulty of obtaining labour, little progress has been made. Frequent attempts have been made to get a road constructed through the Pakaraka Settlement, and eventually the work was offered to the soldier settlers living close by, but so far the work has not been let. However, most of the Pakaraka settlers are well off for road access, having frontage to a main metalled road, while others fronting the internal road can get to their sections without difficulty.

In regard to the Waimata Settlement, there is an existing clay road which gives fairly good access at present, but the existing road has not been located in the proper position, and a new road has been laid out along higher ground which will be very much more satisfactory. The work of construction of this road is to be put in hand in the early spring.

The Remuera settlers had from the inception of the settlement fairly good access to their sections. The making of the internal roads is to be undertaken during the coming winter by the soldier settlers, who are keen on getting work to do at their own doors.

On the older settlements of Streamlands and Waiteitei most of the soldiers are using their best endeavours to make good. Much of the Streamlands Block consists of swamp land with peat on the surface and with a stiff, heavy clay sub-soil. A main outfall drain with branch drains on each section boundary had been cut prior to the sections being disposed of. There was little or no grass on these swamp lands, and the soldiers have had rather an uphill fight. However, the swamp is becoming consolidated and is gradually being put into grass. It will eventually be excellent dairy land.

The old-established Bickerstaffe Settlement has been very successful. Many of the sections have recently changed hands at a high consideration.

Other lands being prepared for settlement are the Koremoa Estate, near Dargaville, together with a block of 2,500 acres of Crown land adjoining, the whole block containing 2,749 acres, being subdivided into twenty-two sections. This area is to be balloted for in June, and should prove a very successful settlement. There is also the Puni Block, of 1,280 acres, situated near Pukekohe. There are seventeen sections in this block. It is to be disposed of by ballot in August. Twenty-seven sections in the Waari Hamlet, situated on the Helensville Railway-line, eight miles from Auckland, and subdivided into areas of about 6 acres, will be disposed of in August. These sections, being so near Auckland City, are very suitable for small holdings, and could be utilized for either fruitgrowing or poultry-farming. The locality is suitable for homes for men employed in Auckland City.

During the year 224 properties, comprising a total area of 326,781 acres, in this district have been offered to the Government for purchase for settlement of discharged soldiers, and the Land Purchase Board which was specially set up for this purpose have been kept busy throughout the year.