

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(H. J. LOWE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—The year just passed has been fairly satisfactory to the farming community regarding demand and prices for primary produce. In the southern part of the district the winter months were very severe, and where there was no provision made for winter feed the dairy cows suffered most. The rainfall was ample during the usually dry months, with the result that the grass has been plentiful and the crops have come away satisfactorily. Inspections made by my rangers in various parts of the district show that conditions on the dairy farms are not as favourable this season as last. The aggregate quantities of milk and cream received at the factories are greater than last year, and the returns of nearly all factories show an increased output. This, however, is accounted for by the fact that more land has been brought in and a greater number of cows of improved quality have been milked.

A striking illustration this summer has been the value of paspalum on gum lands. In the case of factories deriving supplies from districts where paspalum takes a minor place amongst the pastures the output has rapidly fallen; but, on the other hand, where cows are depastured principally on paspalum the quantity of dairy-products has increased.

Generally speaking, the hay crops have been lighter this year than last. Considerable alarm has been caused in the district owing to apparent sterility amongst dairy cattle, which, if not remedied, will be serious for farmers concerned.

A pleasing feature this year was the rise in wool, and many of the settlers who were dairying when wool was low have again reverted to growing sheep. The rise, unfortunately, did not benefit the whole of the growers, as following the slump many settlers were in need of ready money and consequently were obliged to sell early, before prices hardened.

The bulk of the stiff northern lands available for settlement is not a poor man's country. Capital is required to bring it into profitable cultivation. A selector taking up this class of country cannot hope in the course of a year or eighteen months to get a return by dairying unless he is in a position to plough this land, give it at least twelve months' fallowing, and grow a green crop for ploughing in to supply humus to the soil before sowing down in grass. Cheap money, cheaper manure, and better transit facilities are required to enable selectors of this class of country to weather the first two or three years.

The Dairying Industry.—The production of butter and cheese shows an increase over that of the previous year. The output of butter and cheese from the dairy companies in this district for the season ended 31st March, 1924, amounted to 13,452 tons of butter and 734 tons of cheese. Butter-prices showed considerable fluctuation, and rose from 144s. per hundredweight in May, 1923, until the maximum of 216s. was reached during December and January, since when it has receded to 150s. per hundredweight. Cheese, which was 94s. in May, 1923, rose to a maximum of 124s. in September, and then gradually declined to 84s. per hundredweight. Two dairy factories in this district have been destroyed by fire during the year—the New Zealand Dairy Association factory at Pukekohe, and the East Tamaki, near Papatoetoe. The Pukekohe factory has been replaced by a new and up-to-date one at Paerata. A new concrete factory is under construction at Waimauku, and extensive alterations are being made to other factories in the district consequent on the increased supply of butterfat.

The Stock-market.—Satisfactory prices have been maintained for stock with the exception of store cattle, which are almost unsaleable; but it is predicted that a permanent rise will take place as from this winter. During the last two years all the bull calves and a large percentage of heifers have been killed at birth. This must affect the market in the near future. Sheep of all ages have done well this season, and a good return from this portion of the district's industry is assured. As everything points to fair prices being maintained, I expect that many more sheep will be raised.

Pigs.—The demand and prices for pigs has been fair, and there should be no trouble quitting at a satisfactory price all which can be raised.

Poultry.—The poultry industry does not appear to have made much headway, prices of all foods being still too high to show much profit. The trial shipment to London of 1,600 cases of eggs was a success in every way. If the standard of quality can be maintained and the arrivals timed for the period of the year when the greatest scarcity prevails in England, this business should prosper.

Fruit.—Good crops of fruit have been obtained this season, and though the retail prices are high the grower does not get much profit. Spraying-materials, fruit-cases, and marketing appear to absorb the majority of this. Many growers are recognizing this and turning their attention to cows. Most orchardists now milk a few cows and supply cream to the local factories.