

1925.
NEW ZEALAND.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACT, 1908

(REPORT ON THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly in compliance with Section 85 of the Land for Settlements Act, 1908.

The LAND PURCHASE CONTROLLER to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LANDS.

SIR,—

Wellington, August, 1925.

I have the honour to submit the report of the Department for the year ended the 31st March, 1925.

For various reasons very few purchases have been made during the year. A number of properties in different parts of the Dominion were placed under offer to the Government, but in most cases were declined after careful consideration by the Dominion Board. Generally speaking, the prices asked by vendors, when consideration was given to the necessity for providing for a fair return on the capital expenditure, were much too high to ensure successful settlement; while in a number of instances the properties were totally unsuited for the Department's purposes. As stated in my last report, although the ruling prices for practically all primary products justify a certain amount of optimism, it is still necessary when valuing for purchasing and subdivisional purposes to base calculations on more or less conservative standards. Consideration must also be given to the fact that the renewable-lease tenure under which land-for-settlements land is disposed of, returns to the Department a net percentage of only 4 per cent., whereas the cost of money overseas is probably not less than $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.

TEVIOT.

The balance of this property was opened in February last for selection by soldiers, and was all taken up by promising men. The sheep were handed over to the successful applicants at valuation, and the few horses and cattle and dead stock were sold later by public auction.

It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the settlers the great importance to themselves of dealing with rabbits in an energetic and determined manner. The only satisfactory way of coping with this pest is by simultaneous action; as individual effort is of little avail. The block known as "Pannett" is now practically free of rabbits, and has been so for many years. The employment of one man has been sufficient to pick up any stray rabbits and look after the netting fences. The Roberts Block (homestead) has not been so energetically attended to, and the rabbits are numerous; but it is fairly well subdivided by netting fences, and the pest should not be difficult to cope with.

It is important that the settlers should see that the road-gates are kept in order and shut. The wool-shed was mysteriously burnt down in December. We have to thank Messrs. Pannett and Wilson for allowing us to shear in their shed.

MOUNT PISA.

This property was disposed of to soldiers during the early part of last year. The sheep were valued and offered to the successful applicants, and the dead stock was later sold by auction. The leases provided that the Government should undertake the rabbiting for twelve months. This was continued until the end of April—a month later than agreed upon—with very good results.

The first season (1924) proved to be very mild and open, and the sheep came through the winter in good condition. The wool-clip was above the average, and with the prices ruling the soldier should have done well. It cannot be too strongly impressed upon them the absolute necessity for energetically and simultaneously dealing with the rabbits. •Rabbit-farming spells ruin to sheep-farmers.