

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

The position as regards noxious weeds, particularly ragwort, is succinctly set out by the District Superintendent, Auckland, in a report reading as follows: "The ragwort menace is still regarded as the most serious danger threatening the farmer in the more closely settled dairying districts. The control of this weed with sodium chlorate was extensively demonstrated in all districts during the early spring months, and a great deal of interest was manifested by farmers and businessmen alike. The results of the demonstrations carried out proved satisfactory in every case—practically 100 per cent. kill. A great deal of valuable work was later carried out by owners of infested properties, and all reports to hand indicate that landowners are well satisfied with the results obtained."

On the smaller holdings of high value, there is now no reason why ragwort should not be completely eradicated, but on the more extensive holdings, broken and partially cleared lands, of lower value, the control of ragwort is less easy.

Four hundred and seventeen tons of sodium chlorate were imported into the Dominion during the year and widely distributed. This material has been used with more or less success on weeds other than ragwort, but its application to gorse, blackberry, and broom has not, so far, proved very successful. Further trials on these and other plants will be put in train next season.

During the year a number of settlers in Canterbury used sodium chlorate on Californian thistle with satisfactory results. Field observations have shown the roots killed to a depth of 8 in. to 10 in. in the ground, and where a second application has been carried out there has been no appearance of fresh growths to date. The Department itself treated with excellent results considerable areas of unoccupied river-bed lands that were heavily infested with Californian thistle, and the Inspectors concerned are of opinion that the work can be done more economically than by cutting. A later inspection of the Crown lands sprayed shows that in practically all cases the roots are quite dead for a considerable depth in the ground, and any fresh growths appear to be from seedlings.

Experiments on Californian thistle carried out by officers of the Fields Division and at Lincoln College have shown that the best results were obtained when sodium chlorate was applied during the month of March or early in April. Lincoln College reports striking results. Patches that have resisted every known method of treatment for thirty years and more are apparently completely exterminated in one season, the few remaining sickly plants being easily finished off in the second year.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION.

The inspection of shearers' accommodation was continued to be undertaken by this Department on behalf of the Labour Department. On the whole, the accommodation provided is satisfactory, although, of course, some places are more up to date than others. A good number of inspections were made and where necessary requisitions for improvements served. In many cases where on inspection only minor matters required to be remedied written requisitions were not served as a verbal request had the desired result. All complaints were investigated and necessary improvements asked for where warranted. One prosecution was instituted.

STAFF.

I cannot conclude this report without a word of praise and thanks to the staff for the manner in which they have, one and all, faced the difficulties of the financial position of the Dominion, and endeavoured to the best of their ability to continue to render a valuable service to the country with a reduced travelling-expenditure. The work of the officers necessitates them going in and out among the farmer producers of the Dominion, and no one has a better understanding of the difficulties with which the farmers are faced than they and the necessity that exists to-day of economical production.
