

OTAGO.

(N. C. KENSINGTON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Although the general financial position of the settlers shows no improvement, it is pleasing to state that, with the exception of the North Otago District, the conditions have been favourable and the quantity of farm-produce has been maintained. Falls of snow occurred early in June and at the end of that month, and a further heavy fall was experienced in the middle of July. The area affected was chiefly the southern part of the district and along the coast. The usual falls occurred on the high country of Central Otago, but were not severe, and no heavy losses of sheep were reported. In the southern part of the district the stock came through the winter well. The root crops generally are considered good and should provide ample winter feed. In Central Otago the winter conditions were about normal, but in some parts a remarkable number of heavy showers was experienced well into the summer. A particularly heavy waterspout in December did a large amount of damage in the Galloway and Earnscleugh districts. In the Hawea district about the same area as usual was under barley, but the demand appears to be diminishing, and it is understood that for this year contracts on a smaller scale have been entered into.

The high-country pastoralist continues to have a difficult time, the wool-market showing little improvement on last year. On account of the difficulty in disposing of surplus stock, many runs are reported to be overstocked, consequently the native grasses have suffered. Also, the low prices ruling for rabbit-skins has resulted in the rabbit pest being not fully kept in check. However, the rabbit-factory at Alexandra has reopened, and this may now have the effect of cleaning up the runs.

The dairy-factories have had a good season, and increased supplies have assisted in meeting the low prices given for butterfat. Reports show that the standard of dairy herds is improving, and generally individual knowledge in the requirements of dairy-farming is becoming more noticeable.

The conditions in North Otago have been very difficult, as two very dry seasons have been experienced in succession. Last winter was very dry, and this condition continued well on into the summer, with the result that practically no root crops could be grown, and large areas of wheat sown were in many cases total failures, and the sheep were turned on to them. Since the summer a greater rainfall than usual has been experienced, and the grain in stock has suffered. With the heavy rainfall mentioned, the pastures have shown wonderful growth, and the conditions for the winter should be encouraging. Also, the heavy soaking the land has received has practically ensured the position for wheat-growers for next season as far as the growth of the crop is concerned.

The fruitgrowers of Central Otago have had an indifferent year, prices generally being low. Added to this, in the late spring a heavy frost was experienced which did considerable damage to the apple orchards in the Roxburgh district and to some of the small fruits in other parts.

In summing up the general position of the producer over the last year, I think it can be said that production has been maintained under difficult circumstances.

SOUTHLAND.

(B. C. McCABE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Following a winter which brought some heavy falls of snow, the district experienced a late spring this being followed by a very dry spell during the early summer. Later in the season, however, adequate rains fell over most parts of the district, and on the whole the weather conditions have been favourable for farming operations. The grass after a somewhat late start came away well in the latter part of the season, and abundance of winter feed is assured.

Grain and root crops are for the most part good and the grass-seed harvest a very satisfactory one. The season promises well as regards the export of fat lambs, and, in spite of the unfavourable conditions of the early part of the season, the dairy production is likely to be quite up to the average.

Snow losses among the sheep were not serious, and lambing returns were satisfactory.

During the year a great increase in the number of rabbits was very noticeable over many parts of the district, and there is no doubt that they have heavily reduced the farming returns for the year.

It is satisfactory to note that at the present time very large numbers are being trapped.

Attempts to offset the effects of the low prices for farm-produce by increasing both the quality and quantity of the products are becoming increasingly evident. Full advantage is being taken of the subsidized unemployed labour under various unemployment schemes, and much valuable work has been done, particularly in the cutting of drains and in the preparation of land for the growing of field crops. The district is perhaps fortunate in being able to offer such a wide scope for the remunerative employment of this labour, and although, as stated above, much good work has already been done, there yet remains much to do.