

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

During the year sodium chlorate applied by spray has again proved an effective agent in the eradication of ragwort and other soft-leaf weeds. In some localities a measure of success has been obtained with this spray on blackberry, the plants having been sprayed from two to four times with very fair results. In other cases settlers have sprayed once only, at flowering time, to destroy the fruit, this method being quicker than cutting and entailing considerably less labour. So far as mature gorse is concerned, the results of spraying with sodium chlorate have been disappointing, while with broom and lupin the results have been encouraging. In the future, no doubt, much better control of many weeds will be brought about by spraying with this chemical and other compounds. The claim that sodium chlorate will give 100 per cent. result when used on ragwort is now generally admitted to be correct, but, notwithstanding the fact that a comparatively cheap and reliable means of destruction is thus available, a number of occupiers in every district have made little or no effort to clear their lands.

The point is emphasized by the District Superintendents at both Auckland and Wellington that there are many complaints voiced by the better class of farmers, who are asking that more drastic measures be taken to deal with defaulters. The leniency extended to the more dilatory or indifferent occupiers is not in the best interests of primary producers generally, and as far as ragwort particularly is concerned it is felt that a more rigid enforcement of the Act will be necessary, more especially as eradications by means of sodium chlorate is now much less costly.

Sweetbrier is a weed that is unfortunately getting a fairly extensive hold in parts of the South Island, especially on some of the back-country runs, and owing to the nature of the country it is difficult and costly to control. The weed appears to be increasing, and some settlers contend that the increase is more pronounced on uncultivated country since the reduction of the rabbit pest. Other noxious weeds—Californian thistle, gorse, broom, &c.—are still troublesome in districts where these are noxious weeds, but every endeavour is now being made to get landowners to avail themselves of the offers of labour from the Unemployment Board.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION.

A considerable number of inspections of shearers' accommodation were carried out by Inspectors of Stock during the year on behalf of the Labour Department, although on account of the need for economy, and the consequent cutting-down of travelling-expenses, the number of inspections was necessarily curtailed. From the inspections made, however, it was found that, on the whole, the accommodation provided was quite satisfactory. In some cases alterations and improvements were needed, particularly to some of the older buildings, but in view of the present financial depression, owners were not requested to incur expenditure in this direction except, of course, where the accommodation was distinctly unfit or insanitary.

STAFF.

I desire to record my appreciation of the manner in which members of the staff of all grades have carried out their varied duties during the year under difficult conditions. All demands in respect to economy in travelling-expenses and other expenditure coincident with the work of the Division have been loyally met, and another year's valuable work has been accomplished.
