

TARANAKI.

(F. H. WATERS, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The 1932-33 production season has been particularly good over the greater part of Taranaki. The winter of 1932 was fairly dry and spring rains occurred in good season over the whole district. The summer months developed towards drought conditions for a few weeks, but late rains and further sunshine caused pasture conditions to rapidly improve.

A good average lambing occurred over the district, and dairymen had the best pasture season for several years past.

The necessity of more metalling of back-country roads is very apparent during periods of low prices, when farmers, who usually rely on grazing, require to exploit every avenue of revenue-earning and turn to dairying as a secondary means of increasing production. Unemployed relief camps have carried out excellent work in this respect, and more Taranaki back-country roads are to be improved by this means.

In the central King-country district the farms require constant maintenance and good farming to prevent deterioration, and every means of increasing revenue must be exploited to retain these lands in occupation.

The constant care of the Department is not to unduly harass a settler who is genuinely doing his best and maintaining the farm.

Where settlers are financed by stock and station firms, the system of profit-sharing has been adopted in numerous instances. Budget forecasts are estimated providing first for living and working expenses, and any balance profit on the farm operations is divisible between the holders of land charges.

The growth and spread of ragwort both on Crown leases and private lands was phenomenal last season. In some areas the weed appears to have got complete control, and drastic remedies are necessary. A reversion to sheep-farming would control ragwort on many areas, but if matters are allowed to drift much longer even sheep-farming will be impossible, on account of the stock mortality which will occur on these lands.

The continued low prices have had a depressing effect on the farming community, particularly back-country graziers, who are forced to realize held-over wool at unprofitable rates. Fat lamb has paid nearly as well as dairying this past season, owing to the further drop in value of dairy products. Fat wethers sold up to 15s. 6d., and a market for beef at 18s. per 100 for first grade was available during the latter end of the meat-export season.

Crown tenants have made a genuine and determined effort to meet obligations, so far as present conditions will permit, after providing for essential living and working expenses from the greatly diminished farm revenues.

WELLINGTON.

(H. W. C. MACKINTOSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The year just closed has been a very disappointing one. Although in most parts of the district there has been an increase in production, the prices ruling for primary produce have left very little, if anything, for more than payment of living and working expenses. Farmers have thus not only been prevented from meeting in full the obligations they have assumed, but they have been unable in many cases to provide fertilizers necessary for the maintenance of their pastures. Wool prices have slumped to the lowest level, while the pay-out for butterfat will be round about 7d. or 8d.

The autumn of 1932 was very dry, and the absence of "rough feed," and, in some parts, poor root crops, brought cattle into the winter in low condition, so that cows came into profit in the spring in poor condition. The spring, however, was a very favourable one, and there was abundance of grass. Large quantities of hay were saved, but in some districts droughts are again being experienced, and hay meant for winter is now being fed out. This is taking place in the southern Wairarapa, where the Department had, last year, to find grazing for 900 cows belonging to tenants.

Less fertilizers were used than in other years, owing to the fact that the settlers had not the money to buy them.

Severe snowstorms were experienced during the winter, notably in the Wairarapa, resulting in considerable losses of stock. These storms were followed in early spring by floods, and farms along the Ruamahanga River were inundated, heavy damage occurring, principally to fencing. The settlers were inconvenienced for some time, but when the flood waters receded they left a valuable top-dressing of silt. The Unemployment Board's Schemes 4A and 4B have been largely availed of, and many areas hitherto covered with gorse, scrub, &c., have been cleaned up and brought into cultivation.

Sodium chlorate is being used on ragwort, and is proving its worth in the control of this weed.

In various parts of the district white butterflies have increased enormously and are being blamed for destruction of fodder crops. The only crop they have not attacked to date is mangolds. Ravages of pests and diseases in root crops have, in some parts, largely discounted this form of supplementary feeding, and settlers will have to rely mainly on hay and ensilage for winter and early spring requirements.