

Seed Wheat.—The certification of seed wheat has given the farmer an opportunity to purchase with certainty seed of high varietal purity and freedom from smut diseases. While the quantity of seed finally certified is not enormous, it is quite sufficient to maintain a supply of good quality seed on the market, the distribution of which materially assists in maintaining a good standard in regard to the wheat crop in general.

The attached report of the Agronomist gives fuller details relative to the work of crop improvement and seed certification.

RUAKURA FARM OF INSTRUCTION.

The pastures on Ruakura produced sufficient feed for the stock during the winter of 1934. Following the winter, grass-growth started well in the early spring and continued up till the middle of November, when dry weather set in. This particularly long spell of dry weather, which lasted until about the middle of February, had the effect of severely burning up the pastures and also had an adverse effect on the general crops on the farm. An area of $41\frac{1}{2}$ acres of grass was converted into ensilage and 90 acres were cut for hay. The quantities of these fodders produced are estimated at 160 tons of ensilage and 179 tons of hay.

No annual sale was held on Ruakura as had been the usual custom for some years past. All surplus stock was sold at the combined breeders' sale, this having the effect of lessening the expenses of selling. The sale in question was held at Claudelands about mid-September. Seventeen yearling bulls were disposed of at an average price of 17·76 guineas, while 7 yearling bulls, subsequently disposed of by private treaty, lowered the average to 16·37 guineas for the 24 yearling bulls sold.

As regards pigs, a fairly good demand has been maintained for Berkshires and Tamworths, but very little inquiry exists for the Large White breed. Prices realized for pedigree pigs at the sale were slightly in excess of the average prices at the 1934 sale. The average prices obtained for the different breeds were—Berkshires, £5 7s. 10d.; Tamworths, £5 0s. 5d.; Large Whites, £4 3s. 2d.

The dairying operations on Ruakura were affected considerably by the drought conditions extending from November to February. The shortage of succulent feed produced on the pastures caused the milk-supply to drop steadily, with the result that the output of butterfat showed a slight reduction on the previous season. Several of the cows were submitted to testing, but no outstanding yields of butterfat were produced by any cows of the four breeds under test. The average price per pound of butterfat received in 1934–35 showed a slight increase on the price for the previous season, the actual figures being 1934–35, 9·03d. per lb.; 1933–34, 8·83d. per lb.

The position with regard to flock sheep at Ruakura is satisfactory.

Ruakura Farm Training College continues in popularity, and during the year the average enrolment of students was 35. The general health of the students at the college throughout the year has been good.

PURCHASE OF SEEDS AND MANURES FOR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

The arrangement whereby the Fields Division attended to the purchase of seeds and manures required for Government Departments has operated smoothly throughout the year. The longer this system of the purchase, particularly of seeds, is in operation the more one is convinced that the inauguration of this system of purchasing was a move in the right direction, the seeds obtained being purchased essentially on a purity and germination basis. It is undoubtedly reflected in the quality of the pastures being secured on the farms of Government institutions.

YOUNG FARMERS' CLUBS.

This movement, which eventually must play an extremely important part in furthering the general application of good farming, was started by the Fields Division, but the degree of extension reached within a comparatively few years meant that governing bodies had to be set up. The Division is strongly represented on these bodies, and takes a very active part in the club work. Lectures, demonstrations, and field days are arranged for the clubs, while co-operative trials are also being undertaken in conjunction with them.

BOYS' AND GIRLS' AGRICULTURAL CLUBS.

The agricultural clubs, in which many hundreds of the rural youths of the Dominion participate, annually serve to create an agricultural bias, and provide a wealth of knowledge in respect to general farm practices.

FARMERS' FIELD COMPETITIONS.

In this activity valuable use is made of crop, silage, and pasture competitions, which are conducted in co-operation with farmers' organizations, which provide concrete demonstrations of sound practices and which attract hundreds of competitors annually.

THE HEMP INDUSTRY.

The hemp industry has shown no indication of an improvement. During the year less hemp and tow was submitted for grading than in the previous year. For 1934–35 the actual number of bales of hemp graded was 18,814, a decrease of 3,343 bales on the figures for the previous twelve months. Likewise, the quantity of tow graded showed a decrease of 1,285 bales, the actual figures being 1934–35, 3,510 bales; 1933–34, 4,795 bales.

STAFF.

I desire to acknowledge the excellent service rendered throughout the year by the staff of the Division.