

the quality of the grain has been high. The wool-clip has not been as heavy as usual, and the fat lambs have been lighter. The fruitgrowers have experienced a frost-free season, with heavy crops and better prices, so their returns should be satisfactory.

The prices of stock have been well maintained. The wool-prices, although definitely down on last season's, are still well above the average for the last ten years. Some settlers engaged in dairying realize the desirability of improving the quality of their herds and have recently purchased good sires.

The white butterfly has now spread to this district, and is likely to become a menace unless controlled. Rabbits are under control in the greater part of the district: but in the bush district of South Otago and on some of the Central Otago runs there are indications that they are on the increase. On some of the high country, settlers have engaged in indiscriminate firing, and in places where rabbits are numerous the results will be disastrous to the native pasture. Pastoralists have now been circularized from this office that they must on no account burn without the consent of the Land Board.

Taken in all, the season must be regarded as a fair one, and this is reflected in an increase in rent receipts for the year.

SOUTHLAND.

(T. CAGNEY, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

In striking comparison with the previous year, this district experienced one of the most dry seasons recorded here, commencing early in the spring and gradually developing into drought conditions which remained practically unbroken at the end of the period. The effect on the western and coastal areas was relieved to some extent by light rains at intervals, but the eastern inland area was less fortunate in this respect and is feeling the worst effects of the drought.

Notwithstanding, however, the dryness of the season, lambs fattened and hardened remarkably well, and early clearances were effected. Wool, likewise, was generally offered in excellent order. The season, however, was not favourable to dairy-farmers, and the lighter-class dairying-land began to show the effects of the dry weather earlier in the season. Heavier lands, however, stood the test fairly well, and a number of individual dairy-farmers report a good year. No doubt proper soil-tillage and good pasture-management have fully proved their value under drought conditions.

White crops yielded well and ripened early. The samples of oats and barley offered were excellent. Seeds such as fescue, rye-grass, brown-top, &c., also hardened well, and the sample offering was good. The output, however, was much below the average, due to the seasonal conditions.

Green crops showed up well early in the season, but towards midsummer began to show the effects of the weather, particularly swede turnips, which appear more susceptible to the attack of parasites than the softer class of turnip. The weather favoured the increase of the diamond-back moth, which was responsible for the main damage to turnips, assisted by blight and club-root. The white butterfly, hitherto hardly known in Southland, made its first appearance in parts of the district this year. Only a limited amount of hay was saved during the season, due to the output being retarded by the dry weather.

High-country sheep-graziers generally experienced a satisfactory year, and no serious snow losses of stock have been reported. Pastures, however, are badly burned up, and, in common with other classes of farmers, the outlook for the winter is not hopeful. The worst aspect of the drought is its anticipated effect on stock through the coming winter, and early rain with a mild winter would do much to alleviate the position.

During the year the occurrence of fires on pastoral runs has caused this office much concern. In some cases good pasture was destroyed and fires spread into virgin bush. As most of these fires occurred well on in the year, it is unlikely that damaged pastures will recover to any extent. Runholders were circularized on the matter during the year. It is evident that some of these fires were due to trespassers on the runs in search of game. Active steps are being taken by the Department in an effort to cope with the menace, and the good will and co-operation of runholders is important in this direction.