

AUCKLAND LAND DISTRICT.

Onepu Block (690 Acres).

(Control : Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland.)

This block comprises part of the once-despised "Black Desert," and furnishes a striking example of the efficacy of modern land-development methods. The actual development was carried out by the Chief Drainage Engineer, Auckland, who handed over the ten sections to the Small Farms Board ready for settlement. The situation is about four miles from the Te Teko Post-office and School on the Rotorua-Whakatane main highway. The soil is pumiceous mixed with Tarawera ash, and responds well to top-dressing. The settlers have been making steady progress, but the dry season and autumn affected the pastures very severely, and assistance in the way of grazing and hay has been necessary.

The block is carrying 360 dairy cows.

Tarawera Block (932 Acres).

(Control : Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland.)

Situated on the main Rotorua-Whakatane Road about four miles from the Te Teko Post-office, adjoining the Onepu Block referred to above.

This is another case where the development was carried out by the Chief Drainage Engineer prior to the establishment of nine settlers. One unoccupied section is being used by the Land Development Superintendent, Auckland, in connection with the development of other lands in the locality.

The tenants for the sections were selected from the workers employed on the block, and are aware of the necessity for regular top-dressing of the pastures and careful management of the stock.

Provision was made for the carrying of 340 dairy cows for this season, and this figure will gradually increase as the pastures consolidate. The block can be regarded as a successful experiment in development and settlement.

Wainui South Block (782 Acres).

(Control : Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland.)

This unit comprises unimproved Education endowment land situated in the vicinity of the Apata Station about twelve miles from Tauranga, on the Tauranga-Waihi main highway.

The Small Farms Board took over in October, 1933, and, with the co-operation of the Public Works Department, erected the necessary buildings and cultivated and grassed about 50 acres on each section prior to establishing the seven settlers. Further development work was subsequently carried out with the settlers working as a gang under the supervision of the Field Inspector and the Public Works Department. The areas of the sections range from 68 acres to 168 acres.

To-day the block is carrying about 290 cows and heifers in addition to dry stock, horses, and pigs, and it must be remembered the carrying-capacity was affected by the dry autumn.

Any further grassing should be done out of revenue, and the carrying-capacity of each section should steadily improve with proper pasture and stock management.

Part Wharere Block (233 Acres).

(Control : Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland.)

Five settlers have been allotted part of a block of Crown land lying between the Kaikokopu and Pongakawa Rivers about ten miles from Te Puke, which was developed for the Small Farms Board by the Chief Drainage Engineer, Auckland. The balance of the block has still to be released for settlement. The settlers suffered a set-back in the early part of the season as a result of the flooding of their holdings, but the dry autumn which adversely affected other districts actually proved a benefit to the Wharere pastures.

The dredging operations on the adjoining country will ultimately improve the drainage systems on the established holdings, which should gradually increase their carrying-capacities.

The sections are at present carrying 149 cows.

Murupara Block (1,364 Acres).

(Control : Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland.)

This block of 1,364 acres of national-endowment land, which is situated about forty miles from Rotorua, is reached from the main Rotorua-Te Whaiti Road, and was developed by the Chief Drainage Engineer into fifteen farms of from 44 acres to 114 acres. It was handed over for settlement at the beginning of the 1936-37 season, and thirteen of the sections are now occupied by married settlers with their families. Milking-machines have been installed on several of the sections.

A few of the present settlers, who went into occupation at the beginning of the 1938-39 season, are still on probation receiving a monthly allowance, but will be permanently established at an early date. Some of the earlier settlers have been given partial management of their affairs, and although prospects were excellent at the beginning of the season the unusually dry conditions of the late summer and autumn have affected dairy returns adversely. The season has, however, shown the necessity for the conservation of hay in the good seasons to tide over such a spell as experienced in the 1938-39 season, and for the growing of lucerne and root-crops.