

## FIELDS DIVISION

## REPORT OF MR. J. M. SMITH, DIRECTOR

Climatic conditions varied considerably throughout the Dominion during the season under review. Some areas experienced good growing conditions with ample rains and favourable temperatures, but other parts of the country experienced severe conditions through floods, hail, snow, gales, and drought. The northern portion of the North Island had a good autumn, but the winter was cold and wet with a late, poor spring. Dry conditions set in during November and the drought developed until conditions of pastures, crops, and stock became extremely serious. These same conditions prevailed on the East Coast, although a better spring was experienced in that district. Production generally, and dairy production in particular, received a serious setback as the result of these dry conditions. In marked contrast, Taranaki and the west coast of the North Island have had a very good season with well-distributed rainfall. In Southern Hawke's Bay and the Wairarapa a fairly normal season was experienced, with dry conditions during the summer. The autumn in Canterbury was very wet with much flooding, conditions which continued well into the spring, with disastrous results to the autumn and early spring crops. These conditions are very largely responsible for the comparatively low acreage of wheat in Canterbury during the 1945-46 season. Generally in Canterbury the summer was dry with conditions verging on a drought in some districts, although South Canterbury experienced much dull foggy weather during the harvest. Heavy falls of snow in July with gales did much damage, while later local hailstorms of considerable severity took their toll of production. Heavier rainfall than normal was experienced in Otago and Southland and cold conditions retarded growth, while the wet state of the soil delayed land preparation for crops. Improved weather conditions in the summer and autumn did much to change what at one time promised to be a poor season into a good one, with ample supplies of stock fodder and good crop yields.

## EXTENSION SERVICE

The main activity of the Fields Division is the extension service by which, through personal visits to farms, lectures, demonstrations, broadcasts, articles, and correspondence, farmers have had made available to them advice on such matters as cropping, pasture management, use of fertilizers and lime, feeding of live-stock, land-improvement, and farm-management in all its phases. During the war the instructional staff was engaged mainly on such activities as linen-flax production and the growing of vegetables for the Armed Services, and extension work had to be reduced to a minimum. Now that officers have been released from this special war work and those who have been with the fighting Services have returned to normal duty, extension work is being stepped up. Additional trained staff is being provided for, and a number of returned servicemen are taking special courses at the two agricultural colleges to fit them for work in the field. It is anticipated, therefore, that within a year or two the instructional staff will be back at full strength and the full service expected and required by the farming community will again be available.

## PASTURES

Except in the drought-affected areas, pasture growth has been good, although somewhat delayed in the spring. In the area that experienced the drought, pasture growth faded in the early summer, and even the paspalum pastures of the north, which usually stand up to very dry conditions, were no better as far as production was concerned than the rye-grass-white-clover pastures. The shortage of fertilizers during the war is now beginning to make itself very evident in the condition of pastures generally. Nevertheless, the way these pastures have produced under the adverse condition of lack of fertilizers is amazing, and gives some support to the contention that the residual effect of fertilizers is greater than was generally supposed. The