

operated on more or less commercial lines, and the question of settling upon a definite policy for Weraroa and Te Kauwhata needs to be considered. So far as Moumahaki is concerned, arrangements are in hand for subdividing it and placing settlers upon the subdivided areas, the intention being that the revenue derived from it shall be expended upon educational and instructional work in the area extending from Wanganui to New Plymouth.

The herds of stud cattle at Ruakura and Weraroa have been maintained at a high standard of quality, and the farms generally kept in good order throughout.

RABBITS.

The position regarding rabbits is fully gone into by the Director of the Live-stock Division in a later portion of this report. It is evident that this question of rabbit-control must receive further attention from the point of view of endeavouring to bring about better co-ordination of work between Inspectors and occupiers of land in certain districts where trapping for the purpose of securing rabbit-skins is becoming an established industry and quite a lucrative one for those engaged in it. In some North Island areas very excellent work has been done in rabbit-destruction, Rabbit Boards having proved successful in their operations, thus demonstrating that with farmers themselves actively determined to cope effectively with the pest good results can be obtained.

The question of the rabbit-skin export industry in the South, however, is one needing to be thoroughly gone into from all points of view, in order that a settled policy can be adopted which will hold out a prospect of meeting the present unsatisfactory position from a rabbit-control point of view to the best advantage. Under present conditions the inspection staff is placed in an extremely unsatisfactory position in these particular districts, and while its officers are doing their best to carry out their duties efficiently, the conditions resulting from the rabbit-skin export trade undoubtedly exert an influence which renders the work of the Inspectors difficult to carry out on the lines one would like to see it carried out—namely, proper co-operation of farmers and departmental officers.

NAURU AND OCEAN ISLANDS PHOSPHATE.

The conduct of the business of arranging for the shipment and selling of phosphate rock from these islands was placed in the hands of the Phosphate Commissioners as from 1st July, 1923, and has been carried out by them quite satisfactorily. This alteration in control has rendered it no longer necessary for the Government to vote money for the purchase of phosphate rock for resale to manufacturers of fertilizers, and the vote asked for in the Nauru and Ocean Islands Account has been reduced to £1,000. This sum is provided to meet such expenditure as is necessary in connection with Government supervision, together with possible contingencies. The quantity of phosphate rock imported during the year ended 30th June, 1924, was approximately 65,000 tons, but this did not by any means represent the total quantity of this material coming into the Dominion, as 24,644 tons were imported during the financial year from Makatea Island, the company operating there having, it is understood, quoted very low prices in an effort to obtain a share of the New Zealand business.

The Phosphate Commission's financial year ends on 30th June, and it is understood that for the year ending 30th June, 1925, contracts have been made under which all phosphate rock required for New Zealand manufacturers will be derived from Nauru and Ocean Islands. It is estimated that up to 80,000 or 85,000 tons will be imported during that period. The total output of the two islands increased considerably during the year, and at 30th June, 1924, it had reached 451,909 tons, as compared with 313,758 tons for the preceding twelve months. This increase is greatly due to the extensive development of the business in Australia, and it seems evident that the New Zealand business will also develop considerably from now onwards.

The good work done by the New Zealand Commissioner, Mr. A. F. Ellis, has been highly appreciated.

NEW ZEALAND WOOL COMMITTEE.

This committee, which was originally appointed by the Producers' Committee to deal particularly with the control of the quantities of wool offered at auction sales in the Dominion, in order to co-operate with the work of the "Bawra" organization in disposing of the over-carried wool belonging to the Imperial Government, continued to function during the year. Its personnel consisted of Messrs. O. Hawken and L. Rutherford, representing North and South Island sheep-farmers respectively; Messrs. W. S. Bennett and A. E. Mabin, representing the