

With the dairy-farmer the season has been responsible for a very serious set-back. The butterfat returns have been light, feed scarce, and provision for the winter very difficult. On most of the farms the herd is low in condition, and will require extra care and attention to come through the winter successfully, or without a number of cows being sacrificed as "potters."

All crops throughout the district have, more or less, been failures, though in a number of cases late-sown root crops have made fair growth, and will be of inestimable value to the stock.

The one bright and outstanding feature of farm life this season has been in connection with the orchardist—the apple crop in particular has been abnormal. The cold winter and spring effected a decided restriction on the activities of the general orchard pests, while sprays were able to run their full course without interference by rains.

*Land Board.*—Twelve meetings of the Board were held during the year, and the volume of work transacted showed no diminution. As in previous years, by far the largest and most important part of the work related to dealings under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act and its amendments, particularly as affected by the determinations of the Dominion Revaluation Board.

During the year Mr. H. H. Dewes resigned his position on the Board, and Mr. C. C. Smith was appointed to fill the vacancy. By the retirement of Mr. Dewes the Board has lost the services of a loyal and conscientious member. His successor is a thoroughly practical and capable farmer, whose services will be of great assistance in the deliberations of the Board.

*Revenue and Arrears.*—The gross revenue for the year amounted to £268,405, a decrease of £25,929 on the returns for the last year. As the reduction lies wholly within the returns for the discharged soldiers, the recent determination of the Dominion Revaluation Board, while so largely beneficial to the settler, must be held responsible for the decrease this year; but the position should improve very considerably during the year.

*Noxious Weeds.*—The pests of former days—notably Californian thistle—are to-day completely overshadowed by the menace of the blackberry. The past season has, unfortunately, seen no diminution of this trouble, nor does there appear to be any effectual means yet in sight to cope with it. A number of settlers pin their faith on the goat as an effectual eradicator, while others maintain that the extra fencing required for the goats does not meet with commensurate results. Cutting and burning have proved from past experiences to be a check only. The solution of the difficulty, so far as hilly unploughable land is concerned, apparently will only be effected by the introduction of some parasitic natural enemy, and as scientists in various parts of the world are busy on research work in connection with this and other noxious growths it is reasonable to assume that definite results from their labours may soon be announced. The settlers on soldier-settlement blocks where the blackberry trouble is serious have been granted remissions of rent contingent on their spending a corresponding amount in cutting blackberry.

## TARANAKI.

(W. D. ARMIT, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The year just passed, though not so good as the previous one, has been fairly satisfactory. Owing to a late spring dairying operations were somewhat delayed, although prices received have been generally satisfactory. Many dairymen were caught with insufficient hay and root crops, and consequently started the season with herds in lower condition than is desirable. These circumstances point to a lower butterfat production this season compared with the previous year. The dairying community is becoming very much alive to the menace of ragwort in this district, and through local governing bodies an attempt is being made to bring about more drastic and continuous penalties for breaches of the Noxious Weeds Act, and various suggestions have been made to widen control by amending the existing law. Ragwort is, unfortunately, showing upon land which has previously been regarded as first-class dairying-country, and a serious state of affairs will develop if drastic measures are not instituted in the near future to deal with this pest. The harvesting of hay makes a demand on farm labour about the time when ragwort should be cut or pulled, and it is sometimes difficult for farmers on small holdings to arrange matters to a satisfactory conclusion.

The drop in price for wool this season has resulted in an indifferent year for graziers, and sheep-prices in the early part of the year showed a corresponding drop. Many settlers, both freeholders and leaseholders, on grazing properties have found the season financially stringent, owing to the high prices prevailing for all classes of sheep in 1925 and the drop in values this year.

The passing of legislation last session to deal with the areas of deteriorated land has caused a large number of inquiries to be made, and applications have been freely coming in for such relief as the Act affords. There are many cases of back country farms mortgaged far beyond the selling-value of the holdings to-day, and it is earnestly hoped that mortgagees, whether private persons or lending institutions, will face the position and thereby assist the Crown in retaining the man on the lands especially so when the investigating Committees are of opinion the settler is hampered by circumstance, over which he has only partial control.

There is a considerable area of grazing-country available in this district at low prices, and an opportunity exists for men with energy and some capital to recondition these lands with prospects of success and ultimate gain. With indications pointing to better prices for beef, the necessary crushing with cattle may once more give a return to the dry stock farmer and thereby assist in the check of deterioration over a wide area in this district.

The Committee appointed under the Deteriorated Lands Act, 1925, is making an immediate start, and it is hoped that the work of field inspection will commence during the coming month.