

GISBORNE.

(E. H. FARNIE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The soldier settlers in this district have in the majority of cases done very well during the year. In two or three instances the Board found it necessary to go to the length of forfeiture. Rents were, as a rule, promptly paid.

The settlers on Ardkeen, Ohuka, and other pastoral settlements have not done quite so well as last year as far as their surplus stock is concerned. This is accounted for by the great growth of grass early in the year, which put the hoggets and lambs back considerably. The general average price obtained for wool by soldier settlers was slightly in advance of the prices obtained last year.

The position of Repongaere, Glencoe, and other dairying settlements shows a slight improvement on last year. The soldier dairy-farmer is now paying more attention to the question of growing supplementary feed. The season has been more or less ideal from a dairying point of view. The average soldier settler is not milking as many cows as usual: this is accounted for by the deaths that occurred in the early part of the season. Advances made for butterfat show a decrease of 3d. per pound from last year. Speaking generally, however, all soldier settlements are in quite a prosperous position. Soldiers have gained much experience, and there should be very few failures from now on.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(J. D. THOMSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The efforts of the Dominion Revaluation Board, so far as this district is concerned, have been finalized by the practical completion of the Current Account adjustments whereby the soldier settler has been treated in such a manner that under normal conditions the fault lies entirely with the settler and not with the land if he is unable in the future to carry on. There will, of course, remain the few who will always be a source of trouble; they are, however, a small minority—indeed, all things considered, it is surprising to find how very few they are.

The soldier settlers engaged in dairying have come through an exceedingly trying season. Stock went into the winter down in condition, and, with a marked scarcity of feed, disaster was inevitable for the improvident settler. The season has been very backward, and to add to their troubles the butter-market suffered a severe decline in prices. The severe drought conditions, however, were not entirely unprofitable, as farmers, being forced to sacrifice, naturally disposed of the poorest of their herd, with the result that the remaining cows have better feed and are producing better results than obtained from the larger number.

While the sheep-farmer has no cause for complaint as regards price and firmness of the markets, the low condition of the ewes had a marked effect on the lambing percentages throughout the district, with the exception of coastal sections. The wool has been short in the staple and much lighter than usual, with the result that the total offerings for the season at the Napier wool-sales were nine thousand bales less than the previous season.

The orchardist also has had his troubles: an unusually heavy hailstorm in November severely affected the prospects of a successful export return. It is stated that the returns will show a drop of nearly thirty thousand cases under last season.

Autumn-sown crops made good growth and gave every indication of a heavy yield, but continuous warm rains during harvesting seriously damaged the oat crops while in the stook.

The prospects for the sheep and dairy farmers for the coming season are distinctly bright. Stock of all descriptions are in good condition to face the winter, feed is fairly plentiful, and on the majority of farms ample supplies of good winter fodder have been secured.

On two of the dairying settlements, Tiratu and Tukura, where the water-supply has been found to be deficient, special efforts are being made to install a supply sufficient for the requirements of each individual settler, and it is hoped to have the scheme in working-order for the coming season.

During the year sixteen farms were abandoned or forfeited, and of these only one remains to be disposed of. The small improved type of farm appears to be in demand in this district. With this solitary exception, not the slightest difficulty has been experienced in selling these properties, and in some cases a considerable advance on the upset has been obtained.

TARANAKI.

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

The outstanding feature in connection with soldier settlement as well as with ordinary settlement in this district during the past season has been the reduced advances by factories for butterfat, thereby entailing careful administration of accounts with a view to extending temporary assistance where warranted. The factory advances have been in the vicinity of 1s. per pound of butterfat to date, constituting a reduction of 33½ per cent. in comparison with last season. Unfortunately, the average soldier settler has little or no reserve capital to meet such a position, and the amount of final payment resulting from sales of season's produce in London is necessarily a subject of considerable interest.

Returns from milk proceeds arising out of various orders on milk cheques decreased on an average 20 per cent. compared with last season, and this decrease in revenue is necessarily reflected in the mortgagors' accounts. An excellent milking season has been experienced, with an early spring, and indications point to a record production output for the season. The price of dairy cows has tended to decrease over the season, extra-good cows being available at £10 to £12. A number of mortgagors are giving more attention to pig-production, although inquiries show this branch of the industry still requires a great deal of fostering among soldier settlers.