

The disastrous effects of ragwort on dairying pastures cannot be too strongly stressed or too widely advertised, and unless the encroachment and spread of this noxious weed is rigorously controlled by all possible means and by every individual dairy-farmer and occupier of land in certain parts of the district, it will take charge to the extent of converting what is now good dairying land into grazing country. Much good work is already being done to control and eradicate the weed, and settlers are being advised and assisted in their efforts in that direction.

Inquiries for dairy-farms in this district continue unabated, and there is a special demand for sections equipped with dwelling, cow-shed, and water-supply from suitable men with herds of their own or with sufficient capital wherewith to finance their own stock if the necessary housing and shedding accommodation is available.

GISBORNE.

(H. L. PRIMROSE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

In my predecessor's annual report for last year, he stated that he was called upon to review one of the most disastrous years in the history of this district. This year, I regret to state, has been considerably worse, and the whole district has again suffered very considerably from the two extremes of continuous drought and sudden floods. The acute and depressing economic conditions and world depression have hit New Zealand so badly that every section of the community has felt the pinch, but a second year of drought here has accentuated the already hard lot of the farming community.

The particularly mild winter was worth thousands of pounds to graziers, more particularly to those in the backblocks. The rain which broke last year's drought came in time to supply a growth sufficient to carry stock through the winter, thus helping what was at the time, a very serious position. Had the winter been a severe one, there would have been a heavy mortality amongst flocks and station herds. As it was, the grass came away well in the spring, and there was a marked absence of the hot drying winds generally experienced late in the spring and early summer. Unfortunately, a long drought followed an exceptional winter, and lasted all through the summer months, till broken by exceptionally heavy rains at the end of February, causing one of the worst floods experienced for years. The Poverty Bay Flats suffered badly from the overflowing of the Waipaoa River and adjacent creeks, many hundreds of acres of land being covered in silt, not to mention the loss of miles of fencing and much erosion. The settlers so affected were put to it to find grazing for their herds and finance to sow the silted areas.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(J. F. QUINN, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The year commenced most inauspiciously. The effects of the recent earthquake were still in evidence on every hand, and this, coupled with the drought and the trade depression, tended to make the position well nigh hopeless for the majority of settlers. However, commendable courage and tenacity were displayed, and although numerous lessees were unable to pay their rents, only in very few cases were farms abandoned. The long drought period of last year broke at the beginning of this season during the first week in April and a good flush of feed immediately came away. Wintry weather began in the second week of May and there was a heavy fall of snow on the ranges and foothills in June. As a result of heavy rain in July, the Ngaruroro River broke its banks and fairly extensive flooding occurred. In August there was a heavy fall of snow in central and southern Hawke's Bay and on the foothills and ranges in the north. This was followed by mild weather, but a cold change with frosts in November did considerable damage to the orchards and ruined most of the early tomato crops. Unfortunately, drought conditions again set in, and the butterfat production dropped in December. Pastures became very bare and burnt up, and the farmer with no supplementary feed had an anxious time. Very little rain fell until February when drought conditions ceased and splendid soaking rains fell. Unfortunately, the heavy rain caused the Tutaekuri and Ngaruroro Rivers to break their banks and a fairly wide area was flooded. The Esk River also rose and washed away the temporary bridge on the Main North Road, and numerous slips came down blocking the main roads. As a result of this rain, the pastures revived immediately and in a very short time practically the whole district was again covered with a good carpet of grass, and the rainfall from then on was sufficient to allay any anxiety respecting feed for the winter.

The general handling of farms on Crown settlements has been reasonably good, but the majority of dairy-farms can be brought up to a higher standard of management and production. Further advantage could be taken of the growing periods to provide supplementary feed, and it is pleasing to record a considerable increase in the production of ensilage and a fair provision of hay for winter supply. Mangolds could be grown more extensively, these being easy to grow and comparatively free from blight and pests. Swede and rape crops suffered considerably during the hot dry spell from the ravages of the diamond-back moth. Much damage was done also by a new pest, the white butterfly.

An excellent harvest of Hawke's Bay perennial rye-grass was secured, over 5,000 acres being entered for certification. Good prices for the seed were obtained. The health of stock generally has been fairly good. Some of the dairy herds about Wairoa and Nuhaka have suffered slightly from mammitis and abortion. Liver-fluke among sheep is apparently well under control.

The two last blocks in the northern part of the district to be opened, Waimarama and Pukekura, have made a fair showing, and had primary-product prices held good, the selectors would have succeeded in doing well financially. All the settlers in the Pukekura Block have built homes and are residing, boundary-fences are completed, and a fair amount of subdivisional fencing erected.