

PASTURES AND CROPS.

JANUARY.

OFFICERS of the Fields and Experimental Farms Division of the Department report as follows on the condition of the pastures and crops during the past month :—

BAY OF ISLANDS.—A severe drought has prevailed here, practically from October, and rain still seems as far away as ever. It has had a disastrous effect upon the crops and pastures of the volcanic soils around the Bay of Islands, and has severely affected the dairying industry. The other three northern counties have been favoured with a few showers occasionally, and in consequence the pastures and crops are much better. The fly has been very troublesome this summer to the flockowners, who have had to resort to shearing their lambs to prevent disastrous results. Turnip crops are badly in want of rain.—*W. J. Dunlop.*

WHANGAREI.—There was practically no rain last month. Pastures are all dried up, and at the present time there is apparently no prospect of the drought breaking. This is the longest period of dry weather in the north for many years. All grain crops are in the stack now, and grass-seeding has commenced.—*A. P. Speedy.*

AUCKLAND.—When the old year departed a strong north-easter blew, which brought threatening weather. New Year's morning opened with dull and cloudy weather, followed by rain which fell at intervals during the day. The air was sultry. The spell of fine weather enjoyed for weeks previously broke, and it seemed as if unfavourable weather was about to set in. The squally weather made things unpleasant, and right up to the 8th it rained heavily on and off. Then it cleared up, and fine days followed, which allowed harvesting operations to proceed apace. Farmers were not slow to take advantage of the fine weather in getting their crops secured, which they did, with few exceptions, in splendid condition. The greater portion is now stacked, and some of the crops that are intended to be kept over are nicely thatched. The majority of the crops of oats, wheat, and barley were fairly heavy. Rye-grass crops were also good, and yields of good clean seed is reported. The pea crops have also been very good, particularly in the Auckland District. The farmers have also paid considerable attention to cultivating and preparing their land for root crops. Turnips, mangels, carrots, and other small crops are beginning to make splendid headway since the late rains set in. The pasture country is also freshened. Stock are still in fair condition. The factories are going well, although the dry weather retarded the milk-supply. The milk test is about the average.—*R. Rowan.*

TE AROHA.—Last month was remarkably dry, there being only two light rainfalls, which freshened the root crops, but not enough to make any decided improvement in pastures. Excellent crops of hay and oats have been harvested. A few plots of spring-sown oats are not yet quite ready. Turnips and rape crops are fair throughout, but a good fall of rain is badly needed to give the crops a fair start. Root crops are practically free of the fly, &c., so far. Potatoes are good generally, and there is no trace of blight to date.—*J. L. Morris.*

HAMILTON.—Beneficial rains at the beginning of the month; hot and dry weather during the remainder, with the exception of a few heavy showers in the last week. Grain crops are being harvested, and are light, owing to the wet spring and late sowing. Root crops are looking remarkably well, and potatoes are very free from blight up to the present.—*J. Kerr.*

KING-COUNTRY.—The weather was favourable for all harvesting operations. Some good crops of hay and oats have been stacked. In some parts of the district root crops could have done with more moisture, but, taken on the whole, turnips and mangels are showing fair growth. The bush-burning has been carried out under satisfactory conditions.—*B. Bayly.*