

THE RUAKURA RAPE CROP.

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I HAVE pleasure in reporting another successful rape season, due to a great extent to early sowing, the use of the double ridger, repeated cultivation, and liberal manuring.

In the last-named connection it may be permissible to impress upon readers of this report that on this new poor soil we are compelled to manure with the object of improvement, not merely with the object of maintenance of fertility, as is sufficient on rich virgin soils. If manures were not applied in sufficient quantities, cultivation would, in a manner, be thrown away, as the yield would not be sufficiently large to pay for the cultivation alone. This, of course, refers more to that part of the farm which is in a raw state. Improvement of this land is slow work, but it is trusted that discoveries will be made that will tend to shorten the process.

The first paddock sown was drained during the last winter, and a considerable portion stumped, the latter being a fair sample of some thousands of acres of adjoining uncultivated swamp. It was ploughed with the swamp-plough in June to a depth of 7 in., Cambridge-rolled in July, double-discd, tine-harrowed, double-discd, and tine-harrowed in August, and the seeds and manures sown with the double ridge in the last week of the same month, the seeding being at the rate of 3 lb. Essex rape and 4 oz. mustard per acre.

Through the ravages of small birds part of the paddock had to be resown, and this was fatal to any exact account of manurial experiments; but in this paddock the best result was undoubtedly obtained from basic slag alone. The rows were horse-hoed at intervals during the growth of the rape.

Taking all circumstances into consideration the crop was satisfactory with the exception of portions of the newly stumped land, and with this particular class of soil there is undoubtedly much still to learn as to the proper manner of treating it. At the same time good results cannot reasonably be expected in the initial stages of cultivation of such soils. Experiments are now being undertaken to determine the best manurial treatment.

The crop was fit for feeding by the end of November, the second growth being fed off in January, and the remains ploughed under