

ENSILAGE IN WESTLAND.

THE suitable provision of winter fodder for live-stock—dairy cattle in particular—has long been one of the problems of agriculture in the West Coast district of the South Island, with its high rainfall and kindred climatic difficulties. Haymaking is usually a very uncertain proposition, and root-growing and feeding-off is also attended with certain drawbacks. The indications point to ensilage-making as being best adapted to the prevailing conditions, and it is therefore satisfactory to be able to record a successful local demonstration of this branch of fodder growing and conservation. During the season of 1915-16 a crop of maize was grown under the co-operative experiment system on the farm of Mr. A. H. Wheeler, at Rotomanu. In April, 1916, the crop was cut and stack-ensilaged under the supervision of Mr. W. Dibble, of the Fields Division. The stack was built in an open paddock and weighted with 1 ft. of earth. The fodder was not required the following winter, and during last summer grass 3 ft. high was growing on top of the stack, the outside appearance of which caused among local observers many doubts as to success. The stack was cut into in August last, with most satisfactory results. There was a waste of only 4 in. to 6 in. round the sides and top, the ensilage proved of good quality, and Mr. Wheeler reports that the stock ate it readily. This demonstration should encourage other farmers in Westland to try stack-ensilage. With the abundance of succulent growth normally produced in the district during the summer months—apart from specially grown crops—there should be no lack of cattle-feed in the form of ensilage at any time when the necessity arises.

Some twenty cows in the milking-Shorthorn and Jersey herds at Ruakura have been entered for semi-official test this season.

It is the practice at Ruakura to grow each season a few acres of rye-corn, the straw of which gives excellent thatching-material, and any surplus of which usually finds a market for horse-collar making. The farm recently sold to a local saddler 5 tons of rye-corn straw for this purpose at £6 per ton. At this price the crop is a very payable one; and there is comparatively little work in saving it, especially if the weather is favourable at harvest-time.