

AN ECONOMIC SURVEY OF DAIRY-FARM GROUPS IN NORTH AUCKLAND, SEASON 1927-28.

E. J. FAWCETT, M.A. (Cambridge), Farm Economist, Department of Agriculture.

Introduction.

It is intended in two articles to give a short analysis of data from two groups of dairy farms in the North Auckland Land District. The present article deals with sixty-nine farms at Ruawai, in Otamatea County; the second will deal with a group of one hundred and eleven near Dargaville, in Hobson County, which adjoins Otamatea.

In order to facilitate comparisons, the system of analysis employed has been kept uniform with that used in the Department's Bulletin No. 138, "Dairy-farm Management," dealing with Waikato and Taranaki dairy-farms. Figures relative to per-acre production, cows milked per hundred acres, production per cow, area, &c., are tabulated from different angles, each factor being taken as a basis of grouping in turn to show its relative importance compared with other broad management practices. All subsequent tabulations dealing with finance, &c., are shown from one angle only—namely, by grouping data according to butterfat production per acre of productive land. In practically every instance a comparable table will be found for the Waikato and Taranaki farms in Bulletin 138 (which may be obtained free of charge on application to the Department).

The field-work in conjunction with this survey was done by Mr. O. C. Ormerod, of the Department of Agriculture. The manner in which farmers co-operated with him in supplying the necessary data is greatly appreciated by the writer.

GENERAL CONDITIONS PERTAINING TO DAIRY-FARMING IN THE DISTRICTS SURVEYED.

Before going into the detailed analysis of figures it is essential to review some of the main features met with in the area under discussion. The same observations may be taken to apply to both the Ruawai and the Dargaville farms.

The development of dairy-farming on modern lines in North Auckland is a comparatively recent movement, and it cannot be expected that the average position should be strictly comparable with that of old-established dairying centres. The difficulties met with are great and varied, and in some instances are peculiar to this district. For many years development was slow, owing mainly to the system of land-settlement pertaining in districts where kauri-gum has been the main source of income. Improved transport facilities, combined with the demand for land following the war, and, consequent upon price-inflation, the necessity for better exploitation of land, has rapidly altered the position in the last few years.

Land Formation.—Practically all the farms surveyed consist of marine or alluvial deposits with a certain amount of clay and loam, and can be described as all flat country. Drainage is difficult owing to tidal water, and subsidiary drainage is lacking, due mainly to