



A Waipa Dairy Farm

THE Middle Waikato Basin, comprising the Hamilton Basin and the Hauraki Lowland, is a land of dairy and stock-fattening farms. The general features of the district were described in the May, 1945, issue of the "Journal" in the introduction to the study of the farm management methods on a farm devoted to the production of fat lambs in Waipa County. This article describes the farm practices on a 50-acre dairy farm in Waipa County on which a small flock of ewes for fat lamb production is a profitable sideline.

THE history of many 50-acre blocks in the Waikato dates back to the Maori Wars of the '60's, following which allocations of these parcels of land were made to the disbanded militia to settle soldiers in the district. In recent years, and particularly now, farms of this size are in demand as one-man propositions. This article describes the progress made over the past 15 years on a farm of this size as a means of illustrating the possibilities, and also discusses current farm practice.

Situated within a few chains of the lower Waipa River, the farm of Mr. Warwick Adams is conveniently placed 4 miles from Ngaruawahia, 11 miles from Hamilton, and within 2½ miles of the New Zealand Co-operative Dairy Company's cheese factory at Te Kowhai. The greater part of the farm comprises a brown sandy loam named the Horotiu sandy loam, together with a clay loam derived from volcanic ash and known as Hamilton clay loam. Apart from peat, these are the two principal types of soil occurring in the northern part of the Hamilton Basin and support the ryegrass and white clover pastures which have made the Waikato an outstanding dairying district.

Drainage on this farm with these soils presents no problems. On one side is a lagoon comprising part of the Otamanui Creek, with a fall of about 20ft. from the greater part of the paddocks, and on the other side are further gullies which ultimately reach down to the Waipa and drain a wide

By
A. T. SHANNON,
Field Economist, Hamilton.

area. The district is slightly undulating between deep gullies. There is ample water supply on the farm except for two paddocks, water from a permanent spring being pumped to concrete troughs. There being no lack of underground water, it is proposed to put down a bore to supply the remaining area, which at present carries sheep, which are sufficiently watered from the swamp part of a gully.

As a young man of 20, Mr. Adams started out to farm on his own against the advice of many who considered that youth and inexperience were against him. At that time he had spent two years on a Raglan sheep farm, and for a further year he had been sharemilking. His only assets were £60 in cash and a motor-bike. It is understandable that when he purchased nearly 100 acres as a going concern at £32 per acre he found himself with six mortgages on the land at rates between 6 per cent. and 7½ per cent., and the 33 cows were under bill of sale. Incidentally, the entire £60 was swallowed up in conveyance and legal fees. These commitments involved annual charges of more than £200. As a young and energetic man, not then married, Mr. Adams saw the possibilities of this farm, even though

it had changed hands seven times in the 10 years prior to his arrival.

The farm had been sadly neglected. Years ago it had been the scene of historic battles between the local Maoris and Taranaki invaders—all the evidence of breastworks, trenches, and kumera pits still remains. Following the coming of the pakeha the district had been farmed in large blocks, but the value of the land for dairying was realised early. In fact on the property there still stands in first-class preservation one of the first dairy factories in the Waikato. With this background, outstanding mortgages, and a legacy of gorse and blackberry, Mr. Adams launched out in the season which ushered in the great depression.

"The first thing to greet me," remarked Mr. Adams, "was a request from the County Council to clean up the gorse on the road frontage or else. . . . Gorse is troublesome; you have to keep on grubbing, and it will turn up years afterwards in a newly-ploughed pasture. Fencing was most necessary for proper control of the grass. You will see that on the 50-odd acres I have now there are 13 main grazing paddocks and 4 others, and that has made it possible for me to improve the grass by controlled grazing and concentrated stocking. In the first season, in spite of the financial burden, I spent £38 on fertiliser, and got results, because the grass growth carried the stock better. The treading and crushing helped to kill out the young gorse and blackberry."

These sound ideas, however, did not serve to arrest the depression. In that first season 33 cows returned 7,490lb. butterfat and receipts were:—

Milk	..	..	£
Pigs	..	..	369
Calves	..	..	31
Cull cows	..	..	6
	..	..	5
			£411