

STUDIES IN FARM MANAGEMENT



An Otorohanga Dairy Farm

FEW districts in New Zealand have made such progress within the past 20 years as Otorohanga County. During that period the number of dairy cattle has doubled, total cattle have also doubled, and the number of sheep has risen from 20,000 to 200,000. There are considerable areas of easy country still awaiting development or improvement, and in the next 20 years there should be a further substantial increase in stock.

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THE Otorohanga County lies in the south-western corner of the Waikato Basin and is bounded by Waipa, Matamata, Taupo, Waitomo, and Kawhia Counties. It has an area of 384,000 acres, of which 196,000 acres are occupied. It can be divided into three main areas: The pumice country of the eastern hills, the rolling to steep hills of the west, and the flat to easy rolling country of the central area. There is also a small area of drained swamp around Te Kawa.

The county is well watered by the Waipa River and its tributaries. Excellent trout fishing may be had in the upper reaches of the Waipa and many of the streams flowing into it. The Main Trunk Railway runs across the centre of the county in a north-

easterly direction, and good roads radiate from the three stations, Te Kawa, Kio Kio, and Otorohanga.

The only township, Otorohanga, is the headquarters of the county administration. It is the centre for the stock and station agents, and the saleyards are close to the town. At the Otorohanga Agricultural and Pastoral Show some of the Dominion's best stock is exhibited.

The only dairy factory, which makes about 3400 tons of butter a year, draws its supply of cream from portions of Otorohanga, Waitomo, and Kawhia Counties. However, much of the milk and cream produced in the county is processed in the two factories in Te Awamutu, about five miles over the northern boundary. A limeworks has recently been opened about six miles from the railway and has a yearly output of about 10,000 tons, and another works is being constructed beside the railway. Timber milling is another important primary industry and mills operate at Arohena and Ngaroma in the eastern hills and close to Otorohanga.

Twenty years ago Otorohanga County, with 18,320 dairy cows and only 20,600 sheep, was predominantly a dairying district. In the next 10 years dairy cows increased to 32,700 and sheep to 85,200, and in the past 10 years the dairy cow figures have remained the same and sheep have increased to 200,000. In the same period run cattle have also increased from about 9000 to 17,000. Comparatively

few run cattle are bred in the county; they are usually bought in from the neighbouring counties of Waitomo and Kawhia. Sheep farmers have realised that to keep their pastures fit for grazing sheep it is necessary to run some cattle with the sheep. Most of the cattle are sold as forward stores or fats, and from the topdressed central area almost exclusively as fats.

The change in types of farming is mainly attributable first to the invasion by ragwort of country not eminently suited to dairying, which compelled the farmer to turn to sheep to keep his pastures clean; and secondly to the improvement of pastures by the use of Certified seeds and topdressing, so that the fat lamb trade offered almost as good a reward with less labour than is necessary for dairying. Sheep were once relatively unimportant in the county, but sheep farming has now attained at least half the importance of dairying in the district.

Climate

The climate of the county is well suited to the types of farming engaged in. The rainfall of about 36in. is reasonably distributed throughout the year, though there are years when a dry period during late summer and autumn reduces the pasturage to a low level of production. Frosts are not of great intensity and occur for only about 3 months, though there is always the danger of a late frost damaging home gardens and orchards. Occasionally snow falls on the tops of the ranges, but it does not lie for more than a day or two.

Soil Types

There are three main soil types with slight variations within these types:—

First, the brown loam which covers the greater part of the county: This soil is free working and does not

