



Part of the No. 1 dairy herd at Ruakura, which this year produced 350lb. of butterfat per acre.

any State or College institution in New Zealand has experienced the very great difficulty associated with the presence of a large crowd. It is almost impossible for groups larger than 40 or 50 farmers to get very much out of such field days. With crowds larger than this it is seldom possible for more than a few to hear and see a speaker demonstrate his work. In consequence, such field days have usually become little more than a pleasant walk around the farm. In the past Ruakura's field days have been no exception to this and have satisfied neither staff nor visitors.

Field Day on U.S. Model

On this occasion a completely new approach to the problem was tried out. When Dr. McMeekan attended the Sixth International Grassland Congress at Pennsylvania State College in the United States last year he was impressed with the way in which the College authorities handled a field day on a property little larger than Ruakura. Over 14,000 farmers visited the college farm that day. Self-explanatory demonstrations had been

arranged at twelve main centres on the farm. Each centre dealt with a particular group of problems. Thus, one handled problems of feeding dairy cattle; another dealt with fertilising pastures. In all they covered the major research activities of the institution. The field day began at 9 o'clock in the morning and continued all day. Farmers arrived at any time to suit their convenience. They parked their cars at a central point, from which they boarded one of a fleet of buses which circulated continuously around a fixed route, connecting all twelve demonstration points. Visitors could leave or board a bus at any point, so that they could both select the particular demonstration or demonstrations in which they were most interested and see as much or as little of it as they desired. Milk bars en route provided refreshments continuously. College staff were available at each point for answering questions and giving additional information. The whole principle behind the technique was one of movement, under which the crowd was kept flowing round the farm in an unhurried but effective stream.

Ruakura decided to try this system at its last conference. Despite the misgivings of many, both on the staff and on the organising farmers' committee, it worked. Apart from a few minor difficulties, due mainly to lack of experience of the staff in running the system and of farmers in fitting into it, a field day resulted which was rated as easily the most successful ever held at Ruakura. Complimentary references were made on all sides by visitors who claimed that for the first time they really saw something of Ruakura as a farm and obtained some direct insight into the way in which the work is carried out.

Demonstration Points

Although nearly a thousand dairy farmers were catered for during the day, there were seldom more than 30 or 40 at each of the major demonstration points.

First stop was No. 1 Dairy, where a continuous demonstration on the servicing of a milking machine was available. In addition, the route

BELOW: No. 1 dairy shed and yards at Ruakura.

