



The Karamea Co-operative Dairy Company's factory at Market Cross. The annual production from this factory is about 415 tons of butter.

Some form of rotational grazing was favoured by nearly 60 per cent. of the farmers, though 14 of the 76 farmers preferred set paddocks for day and night grazing. Electric fences were used on 27 farms to ration graze paddocks in spring, but on only one farm was strip grazing used all the year. Forty-four farms saved hay, about 7 acres per farm being set aside, and silage was made on 15 farms. Cropping for supplementary forage was negligible, only 3 farmers having any crop.

The amount of lime and superphosphate used during the year of the survey was not great, and 16 farmers did not use either. The high cost of £15 per ton for superphosphate landed at Karamea is probably the reason for the small amount used. Lime from Westport cost £3 per ton, but the position is much improved with the opening of a lime works in the district.

Stock Management

Of the 74 dairy herds in the survey, 48 were of mixed breeds, 20 were predominantly Jerseys, 4 Ayrshires, and 2 Shorthorns. Table 2 shows herd sizes.

TABLE 2—NUMBER OF DAIRY HERDS BY SIZE GROUPS

No. of cows	No. of herds	Percentage of total herds
10 and under 20	5	7
20 and under 30	20	27
30 and under 40	21	28
40 and under 50	13	18
50 and over	15	20
	74	100

The average size of the dairy units was 258 acres, with an effective area of about 98 acres, and the average carrying capacity was 38 cows and replacements. The smallest herd had 12 cows and the largest 70 cows. Usually about 20 per cent. of the herds were replaced annually with heifers reared on the farms.

For winter supplementary feed seven farmers used hay, and 37 farmers used hay in conjunction with silage and run-off areas. Run-off areas were used by 53 dairy farmers, 16 of whom made no other provision for wintering. Actually, this use of run-off areas for

wintering means that when the cows are dried off they are turned into the bush to fossick for themselves until next calving. Though the practice has merit in that the farm is spelled in winter, it results in quite heavy losses from accidents in the bush, and frequently in poor production as a result of cows calving in low condition.

The majority of herds began calving in August, though a few began a month later, but calving was spread over 2 to 3 months in many cases owing to infertility.

Production

The average production per cow in 1953-54 was 252lb., with half the herds producing less than 250lb. per cow and three herds having an average production of less than 150lb. per cow. Twelve herds, or slightly over 16 per cent. of those in the survey, produced between 300lb. and 350lb. per cow.

TABLE 3—BUTTERFAT PRODUCTION PER COW

Butterfat per cow lb.	No. of herds	Percentage of total herds
100 and under 150	3	4
150 and under 200	13	18
200 and under 250	21	28
250 and under 300	25	34
300 and under 350	12	16
	74	100

On a per acre basis production was low, and 78 per cent. of the farms visited produced less than 150lb. of butterfat per acre of effective farm area. With a large percentage of the farm areas in bush and scrub, the area on which the cows grazed (exclusive of run-off areas) was taken as the effective farm area for computing butterfat per acre.

TABLE 4—BUTTERFAT PRODUCTION PER ACRE OF EFFECTIVE FARM AREA

Butterfat lb.	No. of farms	Percentage of total farms
50 and under 100	32	43
100 and under 150	26	35
150 and under 200	11	15
200 and under 250	4	6
250 and over	1	1
	74	100

The production of pig meat was the only sideline of farms. Breeding sows were run on 61 of the 76 farms visited, and there was an average of one breeding sow to 12 cows milked. The number of sows per farm ranged from 1 to 26. Usually the sows were farrowed twice a year and the first litter carried to baconers and the second sold as porkers.

Potential of District

Though it is a small district, Karamea has a considerable potential as a dairying area.

The present effective dairying area is estimated at 7000 acres, but with drainage and other land improvement work it is considered that this can be increased to about 16,000 acres. With a possible carrying capacity of one cow to two effective acres and a production of 300lb. of butterfat per cow, or 150lb. per acre, it should be possible for the butter production from the district to be increased from the present output of 415 tons per annum to about 1200 tons.

Of course a number of problems have to be overcome. The 3000-acre Kongahu swamp will have to be drained, and this will be a large-scale project. Drainage is also required on some of the alluvial flats, but where this is done high-producing pastures can be established.

More attention will have to be given to pasture establishment and maintenance and to the provision of more hay and silage as supplementary feed for winter. The layout of a number of farms needs to be improved.

To enable much of this land-improvement work to be undertaken additional capital will be necessary, and until recently there appears to have been a reluctance on the part of local farmers to borrow money for development work. However, the injection of capital into the area and the adoption of sound land-improvement techniques and good farm management should enable the district nearly to treble its present production.