

NOTES ON THE WEATHER FOR MAY 1976

General—May was marked by an unusually high frequency of south-westerly winds, with sunny dry conditions in eastern districts of the North Island but rather cloudy wet conditions in the far south-west of the South Island. The rain in Southland and Otago was greatly appreciated after the very dry weather in April. Elsewhere stock were reported to be in good condition and growth was slowing up; but in Gisborne and Hawke's Bay some farmers found the weather too dry.

Rainfall—Rainfall was below normal over the North Island, except in South Taranaki and Manawatu. It was also below normal over the South Island, except in Southland, most of Otago, and most of the West Coast. It was less than half the normal value east of the ranges from East Cape to Kaikoura; also in eastern Northland, Coromandel, and parts of Bay of Plenty. Negligible amounts were recorded in the Ruatoria-Tolaga Bay area and about, and north of Napier, which received only 7 mm, its lowest May rainfall in 76 years of record. The only area with rainfall more than 50 percent above normal was Central Otago.

Temperatures—Mean temperatures were below normal in the North Island and the departure amounted to 1–2°C in most northern and eastern districts. They were mainly close to normal in the South Island, except for coastal districts from Dunedin to Invercargill, which were 1°C warmer than normal.

Sunshine—Sunshine was above normal by 25 to 55 hours in eastern districts north of Dunedin; also in Northland, most of Bay of Plenty and Taupo. Kaitaia's total of 202 hours and Gisborne's 196 hours were record high values for May. The only areas with sunshine below normal, by 20–30 hours, were South Taranaki-Wanganui-Manawatu, parts of Buller, and Southland with parts of Central Otago.

WEATHER SEQUENCE

On the first two days of May a deepening depression near the Chatham Islands was moving southeastward, while an anticyclone was centred over south-east Australia. Rain was reported mainly in western and northern districts of the North Island but some showers were reported in Southland and parts of Otago. Temperatures were rather cool. During the next two days, as the depression moved away and the anticyclone moved across the Tasman Sea on to Northland, the weather was mainly fine with somewhat warmer temperatures, especially in the South Island. On the 5th and 6th a trough of low pressure near the South Tasman Sea, associated with a depression far to the south, crossed New Zealand, and a small secondary depression formed on it. Rain commenced on the West Coast and later spread to Nelson and to

western and some northern districts of the North Island. On the following day another trough of low pressure crossed the South Island, bringing showers to most western districts and coastal Southland with colder temperatures in the far south.

During the 8th and 9th a trough of low pressure associated with a depression far to the south crossed New Zealand and a small depression formed near Cook Strait. Rain affected most of the country but it was very light in some eastern districts. Temperatures became colder in the south. On the following day an anticyclone was centred near South Australia, while pressures were still low to the east of the country. In the south-westerlies scattered showers were reported, mainly light. From the 11th to the 13th the anticyclone advanced only slowly on to the Tasman Sea, and another trough of low pressure brought fairly general rain and colder temperatures. On the following day cold south-westerlies once more predominated, with scattered showers, mainly in eastern and southern districts of both islands.

From the 15th to the 17th an anticyclone moved across the Tasman Sea and on to the North Island. Some scattered showers were reported in the south-westerlies, and on the 17th some rain was reported in south Westland. During the next three days a trough of low pressure crossed New Zealand and a depression developed on it over the South Island. Rain was fairly general except east of the ranges in the North Island. Temperatures were rather warm in eastern districts of the South Island on the 18th but soon became cooler again.

On the 21st and 22nd an anticyclone over the Tasman Sea moved slowly northeastward across the country. Scattered light showers were still reported. During the next two days the anticyclone moved slowly across the North Island while a deep depression was centred far to the south of Tasmania. The weather was mainly fine but rather cold. However, showers were reported at times on the West Coast, in Nelson, and around Auckland. During the 25th and 26th a complex trough of low pressure moved slowly eastward across New Zealand accompanied by fairly general rain, except in some eastern districts.

On the 27th and 28th a belt of high pressure extended across south-east Australia and the North Tasman Sea, later extending also to the east of the North Island; while a deep depression was passing far to the southwest. Rain affected Fiordland besides parts of Westland and western Southland, while temperatures became warmer. For the last three days of the month pressures still remained low to the south and a trough of low pressure crossed the South Island. In the westerlies rain persisted in Fiordland and spread at times to the remainder of the West Coast. On the 29th Southland and parts of Otago were also affected. Temperatures remained comparatively warm.

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