

THE WEATHER IN NEW ZEALAND IN AUGUST 1984

General—August was a mild month and was drier than usual in many areas.

Winds from a northerly quarter were more frequent than usual in both the north and south of the country, with a corresponding decrease in winds from a southerly direction. There were more strong winds than usual in the north but winds were generally lighter than usual in the south. Strong winds in the Auckland, New Plymouth, Waikato and Thames Valley areas on the 1st caused minor structural damage to various buildings and there were widespread powercuts. A fishing trawler was lost while attempting to enter New Plymouth harbour in heavy seas.

Farmers over most of the country report excellent pasture growth although some farmers in both Islands had lambing problems and losses due to over-fat ewes. There were reports from all districts of good lambing percentages and high numbers of twins. The mild, generally dry weather also allowed early cultivation of soil for spring planting in many South Island areas.

Rainfall and Snow—Most of the North Island had between 50 percent and 90 percent of normal rainfall this month. The only areas to have more rainfall than usual were eastern areas of Northland, Coromandel Peninsula, parts of Waikato, East Cape and Northern Wairarapa. Most of these areas had between normal and 150 percent of normal rainfall.

The north-west, north and east of the South Island were drier than usual, with these areas generally receiving between 30 and 80 percent of normal rainfall. The Kaikoura coast, as far south as Christchurch, was particularly dry, with less than 40 percent of normal rainfall recorded. The south-west and south of the South Island were wetter than usual, with between normal and 150 percent of normal rainfall in these areas.

Heavy snow fell in Southland, Otago, Canterbury and some southern areas of the North Island, including southern Wairarapa, on the 4th and 5th. Many local roads, including the Rimutaka Hill road, were closed by snowdrifts.

Temperatures—The whole country was milder than usual for August. The North Island, with the exception of coastal areas south of East Cape, was between 1°C and 2°C warmer than usual, while eastern coastal areas were up to 1°C warmer than normal. The South Island, apart from Fiordland and Central Otago, was between 1°C and 2.5°C warmer than usual. Temperatures in Fiordland and central Otago were up to 1°C above average for August.

In general, this winter (June, July and August) has been the mildest on record in central and western districts and in many other areas only the winters of 1970 and 1971 have been milder. Among those stations with warmest, or equal warmest winters (with record start in brackets) were: Hokitika (1866–1880 and 1913 onwards), Kelburn, Wellington (1928), Nelson (1943) and Kaikoura (1963).

Sunshine—Sunshine hours were slightly above average in southern and eastern areas of both Islands this month but northern and western areas were cloudy. Among those stations with greatest departures this month were: Kaikoura (+25 hours), Kelburn (+16 hours), Ohakea (+12 hours), Hokitika (–41 hours), New Plymouth (–27 hours) and Auckland (–19 hours).

THE WEATHER SEQUENCE, AUGUST 1984

1–7 August

A broad trough of low pressure covered New Zealand at the beginning of August, with a cold front lying over the west of the South Island. Rain fell in most regions except the east of the South Island on the 1st. As the trough moved eastward a strong disturbed westerly flow developed to the south and a series of fronts within the flow brought rain to much of the South Island on the 2nd and 3rd, while a belt of high pressure to the north brought generally fine weather to the North Island. During the 4th a depression began to develop to the south of New Zealand and there were showers in many areas on the 4th and 5th as an associated front crossed the country. By the 6th an anticyclone lay centered over the Tasman Sea and the resulting strong, cold southerly flow over New Zealand brought low temperatures and snow to many areas on the 6th and 7th.

8–14 August

The anticyclone covered New Zealand by the 8th, bringing generally fine but cold weather and extensive frosts during the 8th and 9th. By the 10th the anticyclone was centered near the Chatham Islands and temperatures rose. A slow moving weak cold front to the west of the country brought light showers to some northern and western areas on the 10th and 11th but otherwise the weather was fine and mild until the 13th. A front associated with a depression mid-Tasman brought rain to the north of the North Island on the 13th and 14th with some heavy falls north of Auckland and there were showers in the south and west of the South Island on the 14th.

15–21 August

The anticyclone that had been centred near the Chatham Islands on the 12th became stationary by the 13th, causing the depression which lay over the Tasman Sea to become stationary also. Moderate to heavy rain fell in the north and east of the North Island on the 15th and 16th, with showers becoming generally widespread on the 16th and 17th. The depression weakened considerably and crossed the country on the 18th, with further showers in western areas. A broad trough in the southern Tasman Sea began to extend westward on to the country during the 19th and rain fell in the south and west of the South Island and isolated areas of the North Island. Rain became widespread during the 20th and 21st as the trough crossed the country. Temperatures were very mild throughout this period.

22–31 August

A depression and associated front moved eastward across the Tasman Sea during the 22nd bringing rain to most parts of the country apart from some coastal areas of Hawke's Bay, Canterbury and Otago. However the showers cleared from most areas on the 23rd as the front crossed the country. Fine weather prevailed in most areas on the 24th and 25th, although a weak cold front crossing the country on the 25th brought showers to isolated areas. A second front crossed the north of the country on the 26th, bringing rain to areas north of Hamilton but fine weather continued elsewhere. There were further showers in Northland and western areas of the South Island between the 27th and 29th as a slow moving trough approached the country. Rain became widespread over much of the North Island on the 30th and there were showers in the South Island as a cold front associated with the depression crossed the country. There were further showers in eastern areas and about Cook Strait on the 31st.

J. S. HICKMAN, Director.