

THE NEW ZEALAND WEATHER DURING FEBRUARY
1984

General—February was a sunny but rather cool month, with considerable rainfall variability. Winds were lighter than normal, and there were more north-easterlies, and fewer south-easterlies than usual.

Farmers throughout the country reported good growing conditions in spite of the dry weather during the latter part of the month. Although rain during the first half of the month delayed harvesting, farmers in many parts of the South Island reported high yields.

Rainfall—The first half of February was wet in most places but during the second half of the month the weather was settled and dry.

The geographical distribution of the rain was somewhat uneven, with some areas recording very high rainfalls and other places having much less rain than usual. The central North Island, and some western parts of Northland, recorded more rain than normal, as did north-eastern parts of the South Island. Kaikoura and Christchurch recorded about 150 percent of their average rainfalls, giving them their highest February totals since the mid 1970s. Napier also had about 140 percent of its normal February rain. The remainder of the country however was dry, and parts of Northland, the Bay of Plenty, South Canterbury and Otago received less than 50 percent of their usual rain. Timaru recorded only 19 mm, its second-lowest February total since 1933 (the lowest since 1933 is 11 mm, in February 1983).

Temperature—Day-time temperatures were generally below average during February, although overall night-time temperatures were a little warmer than usual. Over most of the North Island, and in the east of the South Island, temperatures were between 0.5°C and 1°C cooler than usual while western South Island areas were about 1°C warmer than usual. In the south of the South Island temperatures were about average.

There were long cool periods during February. Maximum temperatures were 6°C to 8°C below average over much of the country between the 5th and 7th and from the 19th to the 21st.

The only days when temperatures were significantly above average were the 27th and 28th when many places, especially in the South Island, recorded maximum temperatures 6°C to 10°C warmer than usual.

Sunshine—Eastern areas of both islands were a little cloudier than usual during February, but over most of New Zealand the month's sunshine totals were high (allowing for leap year). Western areas were particularly sunny and Ruakura (Hamilton) recorded its sunniest February since 1973.

THE WEATHER SEQUENCE—FEBRUARY 1984

1–7 February

A ridge of high pressure, extending on to New Zealand from an anticyclone near the Chatham Islands, gradually moved off to the east of the country during the 1st and 2nd. A cold front moved on to the South Island on the 1st, bringing heavy rain to some western areas. During the 2nd and 3rd the front moved across the remainder of New Zealand accompanied by widespread rain and bringing cool temperatures. As the front moved away to the east during the 4th a showery southerly airstream spread over the country. Meanwhile an anticyclone was intensifying in the south Tasman Sea and during the 5th and 6th this spread over New Zealand, and intensified further, bringing generally fine, although cool, weather. However a few showers persisted in the north and east of the North Island.

8–14 February

The anticyclone continued to give mainly fine weather during the 8th, but on the 9th moved off to the east, allowing a complex trough of low pressure to move on to New Zealand. This brought widespread rain to the west and south of the South Island during the 9th and to most of the country during the 10th and 11th. The trough developed into a large low which crossed the North Island during the 12th, bringing further rain to most areas. The weather cleared as the low moved away to the east, but a cold front advanced quickly eastwards across the Tasman Sea, bringing further rain to areas about and west of the South Island high country during the 14th.

15–21 February

The weather cleared as this front moved off to the east on the 15th, and a large anticyclone spread on to the country. The weather during the 16th and 17th was generally fine and cool, although a weak slow-moving front gave showers to some eastern and central North Island areas. Showers became more widespread during the 18th as the high moved off to the east, allowing a cold front to move quickly across the country. However, another anticyclone spread on to New Zealand behind this front bringing a return to fine weather on the 19th. Although the weather remained fine during the 20th and 21st, temperatures were very cool.

22–29 February

Temperatures rose between the 22nd and 25th and the weather remained generally fine and warm for the remainder of the month, although there were showers in the south-west of the South Island as a front crossed the area during the 24th, and fresh easterlies gave a few showers in the far north.

N.Z. Met. S. Pub. 107

J. S. HICKMAN, Director.