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'Nuclear war would hit pasture production'

Pasture production in Canterbury would suffer a 29 per cent loss in the first year after a nuclear war in the northern hemisphere, said an officer in the Ministry of the Environment's southern regional office in Christchurch, Mr Alisdair Hutchison, yesterday.

The effects of a nuclear winter will be discussed during a public meeting in Christchurch next week. The meeting, organised jointly by the Ministry, the Canterbury United Council and the New Zealand Futures Trust, will be held at the Civic Regency, Manchester Street, on Wednesday evening.

The guest speaker will

be Dr Wren Green, principal author of the recent New Zealand Planning Council publication, "New Zealand After a Nuclear War."

The impact of a nuclear winter on the region's agriculture was especially relevant, Mr Hutchison said. A predicted temperature drop of 3deg. in spring and 1deg. in summer represented a mild nuclear winter compared with the conditions in the northern hemisphere after nuclear war. But New Zealand would still suffer.

"A Ministry of Agriculture computer model has estimated a 29 per cent loss in Canterbury's pas-

ture production in the first year with a 54 per cent loss in spring production alone," he said.

"Wheat crops would be marginal. Since grains are grown primarily in Canterbury, supplies could be insufficient for national needs."

The Ministry is inviting public comment on the findings of the book. The meeting will form part of raising public awareness of its findings.

"We want comment on what further study and action are needed. Should we be stockpiling supplies of medicines and who should be responsible for any planning?" Mr Hutchison said.