

Many of my annual reports while Grader in Charge at Auckland have referred to the irregularity in the quality of cheese graded at this port. Such irregularity has been mainly due to starter failure or faulty milk. During my visits to other centres I have never seen cheese approaching the quality of some of the low-quality produce received frequently in Auckland. As a result of the recent drought, cheese manufactured at factories which usually are the highest scoring at Auckland has been quite abnormal, the bodies being soft and pasty.

One matter which has impressed me with regard to cheese quality has been the very satisfactory flavours in cheese made in various provinces from unpasteurized milk, and it would only be fair to suggest that credit should be given to farm dairy instruction for this great improvement.

*Creamery Butter.*—With the exception of several brands graded for export at Lyttelton, a good deal of the South Island butter was found to be of mediocre quality, and the Graders at Timaru, Dunedin, and Bluff are somewhat handicapped in not having at least some choice quality for standard purposes.

Wellington and New Plymouth returns indicate a slight decline in butter quality. Butter handled at Auckland has been severely affected both in quantity and quality by the long period of very dry weather, and it is doubtful whether the Auckland Province has ever experienced such a disastrous season.

*Whey Butter.*—The best-quality whey butter manufactured in the Dominion is produced at most of the Taranaki cheese-factories. Wellington quality has been irregular, and occasionally colour defects were evident there as well as at Bluff. The quality of Auckland whey butter is poor and although efforts have been made to bring about an improvement, results have been disappointing. The abnormal season, however, must be taken into consideration.

*Analytical Work.*—At my suggestion a few improvements have been carried out at some centres toward ensuring correct testing results. These matters include cleaner test bottles, more suitable bottles for holding butter samples, and provision against undue evaporation in butter samples prior to testing.

*Packing of Butter and Cheese.*—The red-beech timber used by Southland dairy companies provides a splendid cheese-crate, while much of the *Pinus insignis* used in the North Island is also quite serviceable. As a contrast, some of the New Zealand Co-operative Dairy Co.'s crate timber has been cut from either immature exotic timber or timber that has been denatured, and is easily damaged. The use of brittle rimu and matai battens in South Taranaki resulted in many breakages by the time cheese from Patea reached Wellington and necessitated a large amount of repair work before the crates could be loaded on the overseas vessels. The outstanding feature with respect to butter packages at grading is surface taint on butter packed in cartons. The glue used for sealing cartons has a very pungent odour, but I believe that if parchfoil wrapping was again available surface flavour and high colour would largely be reduced.

An improvement in the application of creamery numbers and brands on cartons used elsewhere than at Auckland is warranted for the sake of appearance and clear identification, and there is a lack of uniformity in the manner of grade-stamping carried out at practically all stores other than Auckland.

*Cool-store Facilities.*—At New Plymouth and Bluff there is no suitable accommodation for weight checking cheese, this work being carried out on narrow platforms adjacent to the wagons being discharged. Wellington, Patea, and the smaller ports have the best facilities in this respect, and several lots can be inspected and weighed at the same time. While the Grader's work at Patea entails inconvenience and much labouring work in shifting the top tier in trucks when sampling cheese, conditions in this respect are generally superior to those obtaining at New Plymouth. At Auckland and the small ports all sampling is carried out in the cheese-chambers, with comparative convenience to the Graders.

Storage temperatures appear to be well controlled at all stores, but suitable humidity control is lacking at New Plymouth and Patea. At Bluff stores sulphur is burnt to check mould growth, and an inspection of all chambers on the occasion of my last visit indicated that as far as could be seen the cheeses were in splendid condition, but according to the Shipping Inspector, who was present at a recent load-out, there was considerable mould dust in circulation when cheeses were removed from the centre of the stacks, the sulphur fumes protecting only the exposed crates.

Through stress of weather or an unworkable bar, coastal vessels loaded with cheese are at times held up at Patea and no provision is made to prevent rising temperature within the holds. The storage company's management has been advised to meet the position, in order to protect the quality and condition of the cheese, by circulating cold air by means of a canvas hose, and it remains to be seen whether this suggestion will be carried out.

Butter storage is apparently quite satisfactory at all stores, although there have been a few instances of high temperature at time of shipment in Auckland.

Facilities for grading butter at all stores, with the possible exception of Bluff, where the room is devoid of sufficient daylight, are quite satisfactory.

*Examination of Stored Butter.*—I had an opportunity of examining about 40 representative boxes of creamery butter which had been stored at Wellington and New Plymouth for approximately four months. At both ports the butter had held up very satisfactorily, the maximum drop from the original score being 1 point in three boxes at each port. The regrading points indicated that the original scoring was sound.