

Many producers are loth to carry out any improvements to premises in order to be in a position to supply milk at times of scarcity. The period of supply is frequently a short one and the margin of return from town supply as against factory supply is considered to be small.

POULTRY

The report of Mr. F. C. Bobby, Superintendent of Poultry Husbandry, is submitted herewith :—

With the termination of hostilities and a return to more normal conditions it is desirable to review briefly the war years in addition to recording events of the past year. In company with other primary producers, poultry-farmers experienced severe difficulties during the war years, with a resultant decline in egg-production. Supplies of eggs available are still insufficient to meet the heavy demands throughout the Dominion, and there is little possibility of this position improving until the industry can again expand with safety. The main limiting factors to any plans for increased production are the inadequate supplies of foods suitable to poultry and a lack of building-materials. Until these two deficiencies can be overcome, eggs are likely to remain in short supply, particularly during the winter period. The supply position was eased considerably during the war period by the importation of egg-pulp and dried-egg powder from Australia. Poultry-farmers have been encouraged to produce to the limit under existent conditions by the granting of a subsidy of 3d. per dozen on all eggs passing through recognized marketing channels. This subsidy has in turn resulted in attracting many eggs to egg floors, from which it has been possible to ensure a more equitable distribution of eggs available to the public. Approval has been granted for this subsidy to be continued until the end of May, 1947. This will assist to maintain organized marketing during the transition period from wartime conditions to those of peace. There is a keen desire among poultry-farmers that orderly marketing shall continue, and those responsible for leading the industry are studying closely post-war marketing plans and the future effective organization of the poultry industry. Appreciable advancement in both marketing and organization has been achieved during the war years.

The demand upon the services of Poultry Instructors continues to be heavy, and the Department has been approached by the industry on several occasions to increase the number of officers available for poultry instructional work. The instructional staff has been increased to 12 officers, stationed at the following centres: Auckland, 3; Palmerston North, 2; Hastings, 1; Wellington, 2; Christchurch, 2; and Dunedin, 2.

There is every indication that poultry-farmers are making increased use of the service offered by the Department, and it is doubtful whether the present field staff will be able to deal effectively with the work offering.

Improvement of Stock.—The past year saw the establishment of the New Zealand Poultry Flock Improvement Plan. This new scheme, sponsored by the industry and administered by the Department, aims at improving the constitution, health, and type of breeding-birds used in the Dominion. Flocks which measure up to certain desirable standards are accredited under this plan. A list of accredited flocks is published and will assist those wishing to purchase hatching eggs, chicks, or adult birds from a reliable source. Twenty-eight flocks were accredited in June, 1945, and it is hoped that over double this number will be listed for 1946. Steady, rather than spectacular, developments in this plan are anticipated.

Poultry Diseases.—Unfortunately there has been no decrease in outbreaks of poultry diseases. The control of disease will be one of the major problems in post-war work by the Department. Steps are being taken in New Zealand and overseas to secure the services of a veterinary officer who has specialized knowledge of poultry diseases. A real need is felt for an extension officer for work in the field and increased research work at the Animal Research Station, Wallaceville.

A marked advance has been made during the war years in the control of pullorum disease of young chickens (*Salmonella pullorum*). This disease is transmitted to the young chicken from the hen through the hatching egg. Fortunately, by means of a blood agglutination test carried out on the farm it is possible to detect the "carrier" hens. Such reactors to the test can then be removed from the breeding-stock. Approximately 700 birds were tested in 1941, while the number recorded for 1945 is nearly 110,000 birds. This has thrown heavy additional work on to the Poultry Instructors, who are to be commended upon the way in which they have carried out this steadily increasing volume of work during the last four years. It is envisaged that at least two new officers, appointed as Blood-testing Officers, will be required to assist with this essential work during next year.

Rehabilitation of Returned Servicemen.—Considerable interest is being shown by returned servicemen in the future possibilities of poultry-farming as a livelihood. Care is being exercised to see that only suitable applicants enter the industry, and a minimum training period of one year is insisted upon. Poultry Instructors have given useful service in this direction by finding good farms for trainees and by offering practical advice upon the purchasing of suitable properties when these men have been trained. A number of trainees have been placed at the Poultry Station, Wallaceville, and the table-poultry plant, Upper Hutt, with satisfactory results for the returned servicemen concerned.