

FOOD AND DRUGS

Milk.—The numbers of samples examined were: Wellington, 2,508; Auckland, 6,013; Christchurch, 5,769; Dunedin, 1,875.

In the Wellington district the milk-supply is of good quality. The number of samples taken was considerably lower than in previous years, and an insufficient number were taken for the reductase test. As conditions become more normal this should be rectified, especially in the outlying districts and centres outside Wellington.

In Auckland the main feature requiring comment was the unsatisfactory nature of the pasteurized milk, due to overloading of the inadequate pasteurizing plants. The reductase test at 63° c. was applied to all samples of pasteurized milk and has given useful information as to the state of the pasteurizing plant. Reduction times varied from one hour to ten hours.

In Christchurch the fat content and bacterial condition of the milk were very satisfactory, but during recent years there has been a steady deterioration in the content of solids other than fat during the winter months. The principal reasons for the deficiency are the low plane of nutrition of the cows and the increased use of low-testing breeds of cows in order to obtain a greater volume of milk. As far as the consumer is concerned, milk deficient in solids other than fat is no better than watered milk. This tendency to produce low-testing milk is encouraged by the failure to enforce the minimum legal standard for solids other than fat.

In the Dunedin City area approximately 5 per cent. of the milk samples were deficient in fat, nearly 4 per cent. were below the standard for other solids, while 9 per cent. were shown by the reductase test to be stale. Nine samples were definitely dirty. Of samples of pasteurized milk taken in the city and in country towns, 10 per cent. to 12 per cent. were found to be insufficiently heat-treated. Milk-supplies in Otago and Southland are far from satisfactory and should receive increased attention from the authorities. An innovation was the application of the reductase test to milk samples from Oamaru, Balclutha, and Alexandra.

Waters.—Regular examinations were made of water-supplies throughout the Dominion. A few swimming-bath waters were examined. Sewage effluents were examined, particularly from plants constructed by the Public Works Department at Trentham, Silverstream, Burnham, and Taieri. Industrial effluents were tested to determine whether they would pollute streams or injure fish.

Food and Drug Samples other than Milk.—These amounted to 2,723 and included an extremely wide range of foods and a very small number of drugs.

Some of those worthy of comment include :—

Almond pastes, some of which contained little or no almond, but were flavoured with almond essence.

Several brands of arrowroot consisted of either canna or manihot (tapioca) starch.

As it was considered that these root starches had a claim to the name "Arrow-root," a definition for the regulations was framed accordingly.

A large proportion of the bacon samples contained boric acid.

Butter samples in general contained less than the maximum permitted amount of water.

Cherry brandy and similar liqueurs were considered to be labelled in a misleading manner, and regulations to control them have been drafted by the Department of Health.

Most of the brands of cochineal were found to consist of synthetic colouring substances.

A deodorant which was alleged to have caused dermatitis contained hexamine.

The fish-liver oils (cod and halibut) on the local market were examined for compliance with the British Pharmacopœia requirements. Most of the brands were up to standard and contained the amounts of vitamin A claimed.

A sample of gin contained methylated spirits.