

the total incidence of which (75) nearly equals that for the three previous years taken together. Bacillary dysentery among Europeans, on the other hand, has fallen steadily from 314 cases in 1943 to 53 cases in 1947.

The tables at the end of this section of the report give details of the cases of notifiable diseases reported in 1947.

FOOD AND DRUGS

Food and Drugs Act, 1947.—The food and drug legislation has been consolidated and amended by the passing during last session of the Food and Drugs Act, 1947. The new Act will enable the Department to exercise more effective supervision on the quality of food and drugs sold to the public. The old Act was passed nearly forty years ago and was defective in several respects.

Sampling of Food and Drugs.—Samples taken during the year for analysis include 16,106 samples of milk, 2,587 samples of other foods, and 256 samples of drugs, disinfectants, and soaps. The tables below show the food and drug sampling by districts.

Milk.—Of the 16,106 samples of milk, 1,342 failed to comply. This represents about 8 per cent. of the samples tested and must be regarded as unduly high. There is a marked difference in the quality of the milk sold in the North Island as compared with that sold in the South Island, where the non-complying samples are 14·5 per cent. of the total samples taken.

In some cases when a conviction is obtained the fine imposed, which may be as low as £2 or £3, is hardly sufficient to act as a deterrent. When a vendor is detected selling watered milk he has probably been doing so for some weeks and has made a substantial additional profit thereby. Under such circumstances a small fine amounts to little more than a licence for illegal trading.

Other Foods.—The principal other foods samples included ice-cream (920), milk-shakes (176), cream (102), sausages and mince meat (264), bacon and ham (137), meat-pickling preparations (210), cordials, beverages, and fruit juices (236).

A consignment of "ground almond" examined in Auckland proved to be apricot kernels and to contain dangerous quantities of hydrocyanic acid. Fortunately no fatalities occurred, but one woman who consumed a quantity of the raw material became very drowsy. The whole consignment was seized and destroyed.

Egg-pulp.—A number of samples of egg-pulp have been examined bacteriologically. In some cases the bacterial counts were very high. This is of considerable importance, as certain bacteria that are found occasionally in eggs are capable of producing food poisoning. When egg-pulp is bulked, one infected egg may contaminate a large quantity of egg-pulp, and may be the means of introducing infection on to equipment and containers and thereby affecting further large quantities of egg-pulp if the hygienic conduct of the plant is not of the best.

In view of this risk and of the generally low bacterial standard of egg-pulp, it should only be used for cooking purposes where it will be exposed to considerable heat. The same necessity holds good for dried egg, as was found in Great Britain during the recent war, where numerous cases of food poisoning were traced to the use of imported dried egg.

Hens' eggs when fresh are usually sterile, so that eggs are best left in the shell until they reach the consumer, and with the present shortage of eggs there should be little occasion for pulping. In fact, egg-pulping should only be resorted to as a means of utilizing fresh eggs that are cracked and unsaleable, or of storing eggs that, in the flush of the season, cannot be used in any other way. In the past many bakers and cake-makers preserved their own eggs in the shell, and on hygienic grounds this is greatly to be preferred to egg-pulping. No good purpose is served by pulping eggs for commercial use if they could be absorbed by the domestic market for home preserving.