

An important change in policy occurred during the past year. The subsidy of 2s. 9d. per bushel on fowl-wheat has been removed and the price of wheat to the poultry-producer increased proportionately. To offset this increased cost in production the subsidy on eggs passing through authorized egg floors has been increased by 3½d. per dozen. It is too early yet to assess the effect of this change, but the increase in the price of wheat and mash as a result of removal of this subsidy is more apparent to many producers than the increase in egg-prices. On the other hand, the increased egg subsidy will tend to draw more eggs on to egg floors and to assist the equitable distribution of supplies available.

No serious trouble has been experienced in maintaining an adequate supply of poultry mash in all districts. With prospects of an improved food-supply, consideration is now being given to increasing the food value of standard mashes by including additional wheatmeal. This will be appreciated by poultry-producers, and should be of marked benefit to laying pullets during the winter.

Contrary to the position in 1947, when power cuts caused trouble during the incubation and rearing season, poultry-producers experienced a good hatching and rearing season in 1948.

New Zealand Poultry Flock Improvement Plan.—Further progress has been made with the Poultry Flock Improvement Plan. The following table indicates the development of this plan since it was started in 1945 :—

	1945.	1946.	1947.	1948.
Number of flocks accredited ..	28	71	105	142
Number of breeders accredited ..	5,508	15,428	26,783	41,862

The conditions under which the plan operates are controlled by a committee the members of which own accredited flocks. These conditions are administered in the field by officers of the Department. There are indications that the plan is resulting in improved stock on the farms included under this scheme.

Poultry-diseases.—Losses from disease continue among poultry flocks and the disease causing most concern is leucosis (including big-liver disease and fowl paralysis). Poultry-producers are making increased use of the diagnostic service offered by the Animal Research Station, Wallaceville. The addition to the field staff of a whole-time Poultry Veterinary Officer has been appreciated, and the amount of work offering for this officer has been greater than he could cover satisfactorily. A second full-time field Poultry Veterinarian has now been appointed, which makes available an officer for this class of work in each Island.

The service given by the Department in testing prospective breeding birds for pullorum disease has been expanded. Approximately 140,000 birds were tested for the presence of this disease in 1947, and the number has increased to nearly 200,000 for 1948.

The Poultry Demonstration Plant, Upper Hutt.—Marked progress has been made at the Poultry Demonstration Plant, Upper Hutt, during 1948. The shortage of poultry-foods rendered it necessary, since the establishment of this plant, to restrict the number of birds raised and maintained, but with the recent improvement in food-supplies it became possible to rear more pullets this year. After an excellent rearing season, therefore, both the pedigree breeding and the experimental laying sections have been fully stocked. During the rearing season it was found possible to carry out initial feeding tests using livermeal. Livermeal has a high riboflavin content, and in spite of its present high price it may well prove to be a valuable and economical form of protein concentrate for chick-rearing. The initial experiments will be repeated in 1949–50 before any results are published.