

A mash containing livermeal was fed to breeding-stock to ascertain the effect, if any, of this meal upon hatchability of eggs. This experiment also will be repeated during the period July–October, 1949.

On 28th March, 1949, a breeders' laying trial was started at the plant. This consists of pens of 20 pullets each of any breed entered by poultry-breeders from any part of the Dominion. Egg-laying trials in the past have been for single birds or for entries of 5 pullets and run largely upon a competitive basis. This new trial is designed to afford poultry breeders the facilities for testing 20 pullets for future breeding purposes based on egg-production, egg size, and the quality of the birds as prospective breeders. It is not being conducted upon a competitive basis. It will be appreciated that from 20 carefully-selected birds the owner has an excellent chance of obtaining a breeding-pen of between 10 and 15 birds which prove to have the desired egg-production and qualities of a breeding-bird. Accommodation for twenty-four entries only was available this year, and fifteen entries, representing 300 pullets, were received. As this was an innovation in egg-laying trials, a quiet start was anticipated. The trial lasts for forty-eight weeks (until February, 1950), and if reasonable results are obtained there are indications that many more entries will be forthcoming next year. By establishing this new breeders' trial the Department is adding to the facilities offered to poultry-breeders to improve the poultry stocks of the Dominion. The trial will be closely linked with the New Zealand Poultry Flock Improvement Plan.

WOOL

The Market for Wool.—The outstanding feature of the past season has been the maintenance of record prices for almost all grades of wool. So marked has been this feature that returns to farmers have been as good or better than during the previous season, in spite of the alteration in the exchange-rate. The large stocks of wool accumulated during the war are being disposed of at a very satisfactory rate, and according to the most reliable estimates world consumption of wool is outstripping world production by 27 per cent. at present. The only danger is that if this shortage becomes chronic and prices remain very high a great stimulus will be given to the production of cheaper and ever-improving wool substitutes.

Experiments and Investigations.—This season work has been concentrated on tests for the efficient use of spray dips. Power-spray dips have rapidly become popular in New Zealand and a large number have already been installed. The Department is concerned with seeing that they are used efficiently, and to this end a number of tests have been carried out. There are a number of variable factors concerned which all have a bearing on the efficiency of wetting of the sheep, among which are length of wool, time of immersion, and pressure with which the dip is sprayed on to the sheep. These factors and a number of others have been checked and recorded with a view to advising users of spray dips on their efficient operation. Each district Sheep and Wool Instructor has now been supplied with a gauge for testing pump pressures on spray-dipping installations and can thus render a useful service to owners.

The problem of moth damage to stored wool is no longer acute, as most of the old stocks of wool are being rapidly reduced and there has been no further necessity to fumigate stores with "Gammexane" smoke generators.

Wool-marking Preparations.—A steady demand continues for testing new wool-marking preparations for scourability. Manufacturers still seem to be having difficulty in securing certain pigments and are having to make up preparations containing alternatives. This would also explain the relatively-high proportion which failed to pass the Department's test for scourability and so did not obtain approval for manufacture and sale. A total of 58 samples were tested and 35 of them were successful and were approved.