

MEAT-INSPECTION: REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH, 1912.

Terminus Chambers, 6 Holborn Viaduct, London E.C., 7th May, 1912.

Memorandum for the Director, Live-stock and meat Division, Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Tourists.

I BEG herewith to submit to you a report on the duties carried out by me during the year ended the 31st March, 1912.

As in previous years, my work has been mostly in connection with the inspection of New Zealand meat in this country, and has entailed attendance at the London and provincial markets, at discharge of steamers at London and west-coast ports; in addition, I have examined all live-stock exported from London to New Zealand, and have attended to various other matters regarding which instructions have been received from yourself or the High Commissioner.

As before, I do not purpose treating at great length many of the subjects dealt with, as I have from time to time reported to you on the various matters of interest as they have arisen.

I have, when in London, attended daily at the Smithfield Market, and through the continued courtesy of Mr. Young, M.R.C.V.S., and his staff I have been able to keep trace of any condemnations of our meat which have taken place. I have also visited the London docks frequently, noting points of interest relating to discharge and the condition of our meat on arrival; here I have obtained great assistance from the Port Inspectors, who have as their duties the inspection of our meat on its discharge. I have also, at intervals, visited the various west-coast ports when ships from New Zealand have been discharging there. On most detail matters arising out of these duties I have already advised you.

I am pleased to say that, compared with the importations, the proportion of condemnations has been exceedingly small, and such condemnations as have taken place have almost invariably been due to unforeseen circumstances—in very few instances was it necessary to attach blame to the Inspector in New Zealand.

Several instances of "ship's damage" have been noted and reported upon to you, and in such cases the attention of the shipping company has been drawn to the circumstance, with a request that care be taken to prevent a recurrence.

The following are a few of the subjects upon which reports have been sent you from time to time, a *résumé* of which may be of interest:—

BONE-TAINT IN BEEF.

Although I had occasion to report to you last autumn on considerable condemnations, I am pleased to say that, on the whole, bone-taint is appearing now with much less frequency than in previous years. This is specially noticeable in connection with one of the North Island freezing-works, where it was no unusual thing to find 10 to 20 per cent. of hind-quarters affected. During the last twelve months such improvement has taken place that only an isolated quarter is found to have bone-taint.

It is to be hoped that every endeavour will be made to maintain the existing satisfactory conditions, as the knowledge that a certain brand of beef is likely to prove tainted detracts from its value and quick sale.

BONELESS BEEF.

During the period under consideration only a moderate quantity of boneless beef has been sent here from New Zealand. The consignments which have come directly under my notice have been between four and five thousand packages (boxes or bags), and of these, 92 have been rejected and 214 passed only after having been thawed out for further examination than could be made in the frozen state. The condemnations, also the holding-over for further examination, have been due to the fact that the packing has not complied with the Foreign Meat Regulations.

I am pleased to say that most of the regular senders of this class of meat seem to be trying to meet the requirements at this end; their meat is of fair quality, neatly boned and cut in identifiable pieces, well bagged and frozen separately, and in other ways conforming to the regulations and acceptable to the authorities here. Against this, however, you have received reports from me from time to time as to shipments which have been the exact opposite of the above, and it is to be regretted that all packers do not try to meet the requirements. Some of the meat has arrived either frozen in almost solid blocks or so distorted that recognition was impossible—hence either condemnation or thawing-out for identification and examination. Again, in some instances, where the actual packing has been acceptable, the beef itself has been of the lowest grade—either bull or cow with hardly a trace of fat visible—and one could only conclude that the meat had come from animals in a state of extreme poverty.

While it is not to be expected that beef approaching "prime" in quality will be boned and boxed, I strongly recommend that more weeding-out be done, and that certain packers (whose names I have indicated in previous reports) raise considerably the standard of quality for this class of export.

BONING QUALITY BEEF.

As mentioned in my annual report of two years ago, the stringent conditions imposed on the importation of boneless beef led to a trade being developed in quarters of cow and bull beef of a very poor quality, these being intended for chopping purposes and to take the place of the prohibited boneless meat. In that report I pointed out that the reputation of New Zealand as a meat-exporting country was being endangered by this class of beef being sent to the markets here, and I now beg to repeat that warning with marked emphasis.

It is understood, of course, that there is a market for a second-class beef, but at the same time I am of opinion that the standard for the class of meat under consideration should be con-