

(2.) DANGEROUS INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

SMALLPOX.

The District Health Officer, Auckland, reports:—

The notifications of cases of smallpox were, with the exception of one case in September, confined to the first four months of the year, thus:—

January	..	..	..	..	..	47
February	..	..	..	..	..	3
March	..	..	..	..	..	11
April	..	..	..	..	..	1

62

The case notified in September was in a European living at Whangarei, but subsequent investigation did not confirm the diagnosis. Of the 62 cases, only 3 were in Europeans and the majority of the cases were in outlying Native settlements in the Whakatane County.

At the beginning of the year we had to deal with the spread of smallpox among the Natives living in the most out-of-the-way parts of the province. Thus the settlements in the Urewera country and round Waima and Taupo were suffering, the disease having spread from the outbreak occurring in Te Teko in December, 1913. Similarly, in the north the disease kept reappearing in the outlying settlements round Hokianga. Practically no cases were found in any of the populous centres except one European in Auckland and one in Whangarei, notified in January, and one in Huntly in February.

The bulk of the Natives and many of the Europeans in accessible districts had been vaccinated, but the outlying parts had in a great measure escaped the general vaccination campaign of the previous year, and thus constituted a danger. The problem was to get at these more or less nomadic Natives, so as to confer the protection of vaccination upon them. The restrictions as to Natives travelling were therefore continued, and only those who could present certificates from certain appointed officers were allowed to travel. As an extra precaution, certificates enabling the Natives to visit Auckland only held good for the journey to the city, and they had to attend at this office for a permit to enable them to leave again. In this way a very large number of Natives unsuccessfully vaccinated earlier were attended to a second time at this office. Valuable service was rendered by Messrs. Webb, Sharp, Connor, Short, Blaubaum, and Whitten, senior medical students, who travelled into the most outlying districts of the east coast during the earlier months of the year, vaccinating all Natives they could reach. Later when these gentlemen had to return to their classes at Dunedin three medical officers were appointed, to each of whom a special district was allotted, their instructions being to visit every Native settlement or house and attend any gatherings of Natives and vaccinate any not already protected. In this way about one thousand Natives were vaccinated. Dr. Duncan had the district north of Auckland, Dr. Newnham Davis the eastern division, where the majority of the unvaccinated Natives were found, and Dr. Childs the western counties. This service was continued till October, when it was found that few, if any, Natives remained unvaccinated, and coincidentally the epidemic had been stamped out. Valuable assistance in attaining this end was received from the nurses engaged in Native work and the nurses attached to the Native missions.

Advantage was taken of Land Court meetings and other Native gatherings, such as that at the ceremony at Orakau, when all Natives present were examined by our Inspectors, and any not already showing good marks were vaccinated. At first such Native gatherings were discouraged, but later in the year, when we felt that we had a majority of the Natives protected, we were glad to take advantage of these opportunities to test the thoroughness of our work. The restrictions against Natives travelling were finally removed in July—three months after the last authentic case of smallpox had been reported. The eradication of the disease was due to universal vaccination of the susceptible Native race and to nothing else, for with these people living in out-of-the-way places isolation was impossible, while one could not claim that any marked improvement had been effected in the sanitary conditions under which they live, as the subsequent widespread outbreaks of typhoid only too plainly demonstrated. The leading Natives recognized the value of vaccination, and gave us every assistance in their power, and in this connection special mention should be made of the help received from the chief Rua, whose people in the Southern Whakatane district were chiefly affected by the epidemic.

This campaign entailed a very great amount of work not only in the field, but also at the office, where the correspondence regarding the issue of Native permits alone filled several large files in a few months. The accountancy work also which resulted was very heavy, especially the aftermath of vaccination fees and other claims of medical men and Hospital Boards following the epidemic of the previous year. The work of our nurses and Inspectors in the field was most arduous, but in spite of all obstacles was carried through cheerfully and conscientiously and with a minimum of friction. The medical officers engaged in vaccination-work deserve much praise for the thoroughness with which they scoured their respective districts for unprotected Natives, overcoming the difficulties of lack of roads and absence of civilized accommodation. The work of Dr. Newnham Davis in the wholly uncivilized Urewera country is especially worthy of mention in this respect.

It is satisfactory to feel that our weakest point—the susceptible Native race—is now protected from the invasion of smallpox for a good many years to come.

PLAGUE.

The District Health Officer, Auckland, reports:—

Again it is satisfactory to report absence of plague in man or rodents. Examination of rats has been conducted regularly, 10,659 having been examined, of which 4,752 have been submitted to bacteriological examination and found to be free from *bacillus pestis*.

The District Health Officer, Wellington, reports no cases of dangerous infectious diseases in his district.