

home on their extended leave, or to and from camp on short leave, and for the general public visiting the camps, have been very heavy. The fact that these services have been so successfully maintained under excellent arrangements, in addition to the ordinary passenger traffic and the heavy freight demands of the period, is highly appreciated, and speaks volumes for the excellent manner in which the Railway Department has been able to cope with all requirements.

The local steamship companies have rendered very valuable services in connection with the coastwise carriage of reinforcement drafts concentrating and the redistribution of returned soldiers to their home ports, and have effectively met all departmental requirements in this respect, which often entailed special efforts having regard to the necessity for maintaining their mercantile services. Where reinforcement drafts can be conveyed by ordinary services and special trips are not necessary the Union Steamship Company and Huddart-Parker Company give the Department generous reductions on ordinary fares.

70. RIFLE RANGES.

Generally speaking the rifle ranges throughout the Dominion have been maintained on a satisfactory footing throughout the year, those at the larger centres being mainly placed on departmental reserves, and in the smaller centres on leased sites. Where ranges are required for the larger centres great difficulty exists in securing convenient and safe range-sites, owing to modern musketry requirements, the trend of population, and increased cost of acquiring the areas desirable. The policy of reserving suitable sites on Crown land, where available, having regard to the growth of population and increased requirements of the Territorial Forces and Senior Cadets, and of securing suitable leases of shooting rights in districts where at present the number of troops training does not warrant heavy expenditure, has been steadily pursued, and in the former case the allocation of several permanent sites is under action. The desirability of seizing every opportunity (consistent with economy) of providing reserves to meet future increasing requirements is to be emphasized, as it must not be lost sight of that land in the vicinity of most centres of population is increasing in value with the increase of population, and the matter of being able as far as possible to meet future or growing requirements is one of paramount importance.

Plans and estimates are under preparation for the formation of a permanent range at Invercargill, where a site, partly in the adjacent estuary and necessitating a certain amount of reclamation, was previously secured.

The provision of permanent ranges for Gisborne, Napier, Rotorua, Nelson, Timaru, and Balclutha, where tenure of previous sites has expired or they have become unsafe, is under consideration. In the majority of these cases great difficulty has been experienced in selecting suitable sites owing to considerations as to convenience of access, safety, and cost. It is hoped to bring negotiations in connection therewith to a satisfactory conclusion at early dates, and to have formation of ranges pushed on during the year.

71. VETERINARY SERVICES AND REMOUNTS.

Since the outbreak of war a very large number of horses have been purchased, the average cost being £16 19s. for riding and £22 7s. for draught horses. It is satisfactory, from a departmental standpoint, to note that those latest purchased were obtained at no greater cost than in the beginning, and, moreover, that they were, if anything, of better quality. It is evident that there is still an ample supply of good horses of the right class available if wanted. The great bulk of the purchasing was in the hands of Inspectors of Stock in the Department of Agriculture, and the excellent work done by these officers is highly appreciated and deserving of great praise.

72. SUPERVISION OF FITTING AND GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS ON HORSE TRANSPORTS.

This duty was rendered somewhat less exacting owing to the fact that all concerned did their best to ensure that the right thing was done in fitting out ships for the carriage of horses. In this connection it is desired to place on record the very valuable services rendered by the late Lieut.-Colonel Clayton, N.Z.V.C. The low average mortality among the horses carried by sea affords evidence of the quality of the work done, when viewed from the standpoint of shipping arrangements.

73. VETERINARY CARE OF HORSES AT SEA.

Save in the case of three ships carrying a comparatively small number of horses, where capable military officers had charge and did well, veterinary officers have been detailed for duty on each transport despatched. That they worked well and successfully is indicated by results, the average loss of horses at sea up to date having been only 3.05 per cent.

74. THE REMOUNT DEPOT.

The present Remount Depot was established at Upper Hutt in October, 1914. Previously, through the courtesy of the Manawatu Agricultural and Pastoral Association, a temporary and most useful depot had been in use on the association's showground at Palmerston North. The Upper Hutt depot has proved quite satisfactory, the buildings already on the ground affording all necessary provision for office purposes, necessary cooking accommodation, and forage storage, and a good water-supply being available; an additional advantage being its nearness to the railway-station and the consequent convenience in the detraining and entraining of horses.

75. TRAINING OF THE VETERINARY CORPS REINFORCEMENTS.

This has been carried out in the training-camps by the Veterinary Officers doing duty for the time being. In all reinforcement drafts care has been exercised in the selection of recruits, and they have been given a good practical training.