

DAIRY DIVISION.

REPORT OF D. CUDDIE, DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR.

Wellington, 22nd May, 1917.

The Secretary of Agriculture, Industries, and Commerce.

I FORWARD herewith the annual report of this Division for the year ended 31st March, 1917. In doing so I wish to acknowledge the assistance rendered by Mr. W. M. Singleton, Assistant Director, in connection with the work of the Division.

D. CUDDIE, Director, Dairy Division.

THE SEASON.

Generally speaking, it can be said that the past dairy season has been a profitable one for those engaged in the production of butter and cheese. The weather-conditions have been favourable in the provincial districts of Auckland, Hawke's Bay, and Southland; but in Taranaki, Wellington, Canterbury, and North Otago several months passed with little or no rainfall. This hindered the growth of grass to a very considerable extent. Consequently, the supply of milk showed an earlier decrease than usual. Many farmers were thus forced to begin feeding their cows on crops specially grown for use later in the year. Fortunately, however, a much larger number of the settlers now make provision for a contingency of this kind, and are therefore able to keep their cows milking longer than would otherwise be the case when grass becomes scarce owing to a partial drought.

LABOUR DIFFICULTIES IN REGARD TO DAIRYING.

Owing to the continuation of the war farmers have experienced great difficulty in obtaining any extra help required during the busier part of the year. Offers of higher wages in many instances were of little avail, and much of the farm-work has had to be postponed for the time being, the owners having to confine their efforts to attending to the dairy herds. Moreover, the position has become so acute that a number of the farmers have already decided to milk fewer cows next year.

In a less degree the same trouble has arisen in connection with the engagement of dairy-factory employees, more especially in the case of skilled men. Quite a number of first and second assistants, as well as a number of factory-managers, have joined the Expeditionary Forces, and it has been extremely difficult to fill these vacancies; in fact, dairy companies have been compelled to engage many hands who have not had the necessary experience in this class of work.

EXPORTS.

Although the production of butter has been well maintained, the quantities exported for the year show a decrease as compared with the previous year's figures. Owing to the scarcity of shipping-space large quantities of butter throughout New Zealand were awaiting shipment, and consequently the quantities in cool stores on the 31st March far exceeded the total on the same date last year. As showing the extent of the accumulation of this product it may be stated that the number of boxes in store at the end of the year under review totalled 239,936, as against 87,678 boxes on the same date last year. On the other hand, cheese exports show a slight increase, the quantity exported amounting to 849,478 cwt., or 4,035 cwt. in excess of last year's total. This apparent disparity between the butter and cheese shipments may be explained by the fact that all the cheese was purchased by the Imperial Government from October, 1916, and preference of shipments given to this produce for the needs of the Army. Then, again, a fairly large accumulation of the previous year's production was in store on 1st April, 1916, and unusually heavy shipments took place from then onward to July—a period in which little or no shipments of butter take place. The major portion of the butter and cheese exported was shipped to the United Kingdom, and vessels representing fifty voyages engaged in carrying this produce to the Home markets.

The following tables show the quantities and classes of dairy-produce exported from the various grading-ports:—

EXPORTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1917.

Creamery Butter for United Kingdom.

Port.	Total Packages.	First Grade.	Second Grade.	Third Grade.
Auckland	381,862	372,775	9,063	24
Gisborne	8,405	8,405	..	..
New Plymouth	106,470	105,907	563	..
Wanganui	12,891	12,082	809	..
Patea	4,482	3,336	1,146	..
Wellington	119,419	116,072	3,347	..
Lyttelton	25,777	25,618	159	..
Dunedin	15,503	15,218	285	..
Totals	674,809	659,413	15,372	24