

AMENDMENT OF THE FERTILIZERS ACT, 1908.

Among other matters affecting the agricultural interest of the Dominion and the various problems that have arisen in connection with the war might be mentioned the amendment of the Fertilizers Act, 1908. It was suggested to the Board that this Act might be amended to provide for a differentiation of the unit values in phosphates of varying solubility on similar lines to the scale that had been adopted by the Australian Government. A committee of the Board went carefully into the matter with Mr. Aston, Agricultural Chemist, and other officers of the Department. This committee recommended you to take steps to amend the law in the direction suggested, so as to bring it into line with similar Acts in Australia and Great Britain; also to provide that the fineness of grinding of the phosphate rock and other manures should be specified in the invoice. A further recommendation has recently been made to you regarding the appointment of a committee of the Board to act with the officers of the Department in regard to the drawing-up of amendments to the Fertilizers Act, and with the object of giving the vendor full credit for the amount of phosphoric acid contained in the fertilizer sold by him.

SHEEP STATISTICS.

We had several conferences in connection with the collection of the sheep statistics with the Government Statistician, Mr. Fraser, and with Dr. Reakes, Director of the Live-stock Division. It was eventually decided that there should be two collections: the Government Statistician would collect from the shearing returns as at the 31st January, and the Department of Agriculture would continue to collect its returns on the 30th April, so that comparative data would still be available.

EXPORT OF INFERIOR STUD SHEEP.

We also discussed with Mr. Pope and Dr. Reakes the question of the export of inferior stud sheep. Mr. Pope pointed out that the proposal to prohibit the export of inferior sheep would require the passing of legislation to deal with it, and such being the case we asked the New Zealand Sheep-breeders' Association of Christchurch, which first brought the question up, if it would suggest any means whereby this could be successfully done. The matter was further considered at a later meeting, when we had placed before us the views of Mr. J. D. Ritchie, late Secretary of Agriculture; but while members agreed that some check was necessary it was recognized that there were many difficulties in the way. Neither the Board nor the Department had the statutory power to prevent the export of inferior sheep, and in view of that fact it was thought better for the associations themselves to take action to remedy the trouble. It was, however, resolved, "That the Board of Agriculture perfectly approves of any effort made to keep up the quality of the stud rams exported, but as there is no legislation empowering the Department to prevent the shipping of inferior sheep it is hoped that the breeders' associations will deal with the matter themselves on similar lines to those adopted by the Romney Marsh Association."

It has been suggested to the Board more than once that they should endeavour to arrange for a conference of the various flock, herd, and draught-horse stud-book authorities, with a view of their coming to a decision to issue a complete publication yearly of each of the different breeds. This is a matter which the incoming Board might well take in hand.

The Board have already been in communication with the various breed associations throughout the Dominion, and have urged them to give effect to the recommendation of the Council of Agriculture to have all sheep for export carefully inspected and approved by their experts as being typical of the breed, and to make it publicly known in the outside markets where New Zealand stock is sold that no sheep should be recognized as stud sheep unless accompanied by a certificate from the breed association or flock-book authority with which the animals are registered.

CONTROL OF CONTAGIOUS MAMMITIS.

The question of diseases of live-stock was fully discussed with Dr. Reakes, Director of the Live-stock Division, and in connection with the control of contagious mammitis the Board forwarded you the following resolution: "That contagious mammitis be made a notifiable disease under the Stock Act, and that before a proved affected animal be allowed to leave the owner's property she must be branded by an Inspector, so that she cannot be sold as a milker."

ERADICATION OF SHEEP-LICE.

This question received the Board's consideration, and after a report had been drawn up by the committee appointed to go into the matter the following resolutions were passed:—

- "(1.) That as systematic an inspection of sheep on farms as is possible be carried out by Inspectors, in order to see that the provisions of the Act regarding dipping are properly carried out. In this duty Inspectors to act as far as possible on the lines of advising farmers and making them realize the necessity and advantage of proper dipping, and only to adopt serious measures when they are not amenable to reason. It is recognized that before this can be done a larger staff of Inspectors is needed.
- "(2.) For fulfilling the legal requirements of the Act in the matter of dipping only dips approved for the purpose to be used, these approved dips to be poisonous.
- "(3.) Saleyard inspection of sheep to be continued.
- "(4.) Advice to farmers, in the form of lectures, leaflets, and Press articles on proper methods of dipping, the right kind of water to use, &c., to be freely disseminated, and a general vigorous educational policy on the whole question to be adopted."