

is prohibited; there is thus small cause for alarm. Regulations dealing with the matter, are, however, being considered.

The important work of inspection of dairies supplying milk for domestic consumption in the towns has engaged close attention. The structural and sanitary conditions of these dairies is steadily improving, but the occupiers are often lessees only, and legislation appears to be advisable placing a share of the cost of improvements on the owner in such cases.

The Division again rendered much direct service in connection with Imperial purchases of meat, wool, &c. For a large part of the year the Director was engaged as a member of a special committee set up to deal with the wool-purchase scheme, also the acquisition of sheep-skins and hides. In addition to supervising meat-grading on Imperial account at the freezing-works, the Meat Inspectors carried out checking and certifying duties in regard to slipe wool and other by-products acquired.

The high price and scarcity of cereal foodstuffs was a severe test to the poultry industry, and led to very heavy culling of inferior birds. In this work the expert advice of the Poultry Instructors has been largely availed of. Feeding tests were continued at Milton Poultry Station, and gave further valuable evidence that wheat and pollard could be profitably substituted by other cheaper and more easily obtained foods.

FIELDS DIVISION.

The divisional headquarters were transferred to Weraroa in April, in circumstances referred to last year. Although difficulties were at first experienced in connection with accommodation, administrative and professional work of unusual volume has been transacted, and numerous special duties arising out of the war still further widened the scope of the Division's activities.

The corps of student-assistants was much reduced from various causes, including the operation of the Military Service Act. Owing to the uncertainty of retaining new students and providing adequate instruction during the currency of the war no vacancies have been filled.

The proposal for a scheme of farm-management surveys in districts did not advance beyond the preliminary stage. The matter remains one of essential importance, and the work should be the basis of all fields instructional efforts.

The experimental work at the headquarters station (Central Development Farm), in addition to the usual fertilizer and variety tests, embraced a number of defined projects, such as calf-rearing methods, relative values of summer forages for milk-production, pork-production on forage crops, crosses for fat-lamb production, and temporary pastures for intensive dairy farms. Useful data were secured along these lines.

Operations at Ruakura have been well maintained all round. There is a growing tendency to load this station with various kinds of public service not directly concerned with the work of the farm proper, but which legitimately call for performance, such as agricultural training for teachers, training-college students, &c. The problem of the near future is how to meet these and other demands of the public without unduly increasing expenditure.

The Mounahaki Experimental Farm has continued to play a useful role in the Wellington-West Coast district. In spite of exceptional labour difficulties the farm and stock have been kept at an excellent level.

The Ashburton Experimental Farm, operated by the Department during the last two or three years, is now beginning to give useful results from extensive series of experiments and trials.

A good deal of experimental work was done in the various districts under the several Fields Supervisors. Plots to further test the capabilities of the northern gum lands were established at Puwera, near Whangarei. In regard to pumice-land tests, additional land has been acquired in the Taupo neighbourhood with the object of extending the work, and important points will be subjected to experimental determination. In Hawke's Bay activities have been carried out in conjunction with the Hawke's Bay Farming Development Association, an organization comprising local agricultural and pastoral associations, County Councils, and other local bodies.

The most interesting feature in Taranaki was the initiation of a model dairy farm and experimental area at Stratford by a local society presided over by the Department's Fields Supervisor and subsidized by the Government. Operations at the Marton Experimental Area have been continued. Work in Canterbury has been mainly concentrated on the promotion of lucerne-growing. In Southland an experimental area at Gore was given a start with useful cropping schemes, and will be further developed.

The position as regards the rabbit nuisance remains much the same as in previous years. One of the causes of increase of the pest in certain districts was the calling-up of the local Fields Inspectors, and unavoidable delays in filling vacancies. After the war the position existing in the South in consequence of the revenue obtainable from the export of rabbits—both carcasses and skins—will have to be dealt with by legislation, unless large areas that are capable of carrying live-stock of a more profitable nature are to be practically devoted to the rabbit industry.

The control of noxious weeds is still the bugbear of the Department and those officers who have to administer the Act relating to it. Owing to war conditions the Act has been administered leniently and with discretion, especially in badly affected districts, but in districts comparatively free from noxious weeds more stringent efforts have been made to protect the lands from infection.

HORTICULTURE DIVISION.

Plantings of commercial orchards during the year showed a considerable decrease compared with the previous period, but were still substantial. No export was possible owing to shipping-shortage, but the industry continued to be built up all round. The assistance offered by the Fruit Preserving Industry Act was well availed of for the provision of cool stores, &c.