

Horses.—The enumeration of the horses in the Dominion taken in January, 1919, showed a decrease of 10,412 as compared with the previous year, the figures being 363,188 and 373,600 respectively.

SLAUGHTER OF STOCK FOR EXPORT.

The contract with the Imperial Government for the purchase of all meat slaughtered for export remains in force until 30th June, 1920, at the schedule of prices arranged in November, 1916, and a very large quantity of meat still remains in the freezing-chambers, with little prospect of obtaining a clearance before the commencement of the next season's slaughterings. The termination of the contract and the difficulty of finding immediate shipping will necessitate the making of financial arrangements to meet the new position, and these may be expected to mean a marked increase on pre-war charges.

As will be seen from the following table, a very substantial increase has taken place in the number of cattle, sheep, and lambs slaughtered at meat-export works (principally for export) during the twelve months ended 31st March, compared with the previous twelvemonth's slaughterings :—

	31st March, 1920.	31st March, 1919.	Increase.
Cattle	256,459	218,871	37,588
Sheep	4,658,897	3,690,152	968,745
Lambs	3,139,238	2,845,413	293,825

Several of the freezing companies found it necessary to provide additional cold-storage accommodation during the year. Two new meat-export slaughterhouses are about to be erected, both in the North Island.

INSPECTION OF MEAT.

The inspection of all carcasses slaughtered at meat-export slaughterhouses, abattoirs, and bacon-factories was carried out satisfactorily, and now that all our troops have returned no further difficulty should be experienced in keeping a sufficient staff to undertake this work.

The following are the numbers of each class of stock slaughtered under direct inspection during the year ended 31st March, 1920 :—

Cattle ..	359,173	Sheep ..	5,263,605	Swine ..	115,225
Calves ..	32,069	Lambs ..	3,254,184		

With the exception of swine, which again show a decrease in the number slaughtered, these figures easily constitute a record for any one year, the increases on the corresponding period of last year being as follows : Cattle, 51,357 ; calves, 13,197 ; sheep, 1,093,081 ; lambs, 325,292 (1,418,373 in the combined sheep and lamb slaughterings).

The following table indicates the destination of the dressed carcasses, those animals slaughtered at abattoirs being almost wholly for local consumption, and those slaughtered at meat-export slaughterhouses being (except in the case of swine) intended principally for export :—

	Abattoirs.	Meat-export Slaughterhouses.	Bacon-factories.
Cattle	102,714	256,459	..
Calves	22,692	9,377	..
Sheep	604,708	4,658,897	..
Lambs	114,946	3,139,238	..
Swine	53,886	38,043	23,296

At ordinary slaughterhouses the stock killed was as follows : Cattle, 54,033 ; calves, 2,302 ; sheep, 248,877 ; lambs, 26,417 ; swine, 25,520.

In addition, 24,424 carcasses of pigs killed and dressed by farmers under the exemption clause of the Slaughtering and Inspection Act and sent in to butchers' shops and small bacon-factories were inspected by departmental officers.

COMPENSATION PAID FOR STOCK CONDEMNED.

During the year 4,148 head of cattle were condemned and ordered to be destroyed under the provisions of the Stock Act, and compensation to the amount of £15,034 (being at the rate of half the market value as fixed at the time of condemnation) was paid out for the financial year. Compensation paid for animals condemned on inspection at the time of slaughter, under the provisions of the Slaughtering and Inspection Act, amounted to £12,014, making the total compensation paid during the year under the Acts named £27,048, as compared with £22,438 for the previous year.

IMPORTATION OF BREEDING-STOCK.

Shipping difficulties and the high cost involved were undoubtedly again responsible for the numbers of stud stock imported not being greater than they were. The following animals were imported and entered into quarantine as required under the regulations : Two trotting-stallions, five bulls, three rams, and four pigs (three sows and one boar).

INSPECTION OF DAIRIES SUPPLYING MILK TO TOWNS.

The inspection of dairy premises and herds supplying milk for town consumption has been carried out energetically during the year, those supplying milk to the cities and larger towns being necessarily given more frequent visits of inspection to ensure that, as far as possible, the utmost cleanliness is observed and conditions maintained in respect to each of the premises as is compatible with the requirements of a good and clear milk-supply. The scarcity of cement has to some extent hampered the efforts of the Inspectors in connection with the provision of concrete floors and drains, but on the whole the premises are maintained in reasonably good condition and the Department's requirements attended to.