

will give poultry-keepers an incentive to increase their flocks and so increase the Dominion's egg-yield. Asiatic egg-material in particular can be sold at a price which the local producer cannot compete with. It will thus be readily understood that poultrymen did not have sufficient confidence in their business to increase their flocks so long as this cheap egg-material was allowed to be imported in unlimited quantities.

The trial shipment of about 120,000 eggs sent to Canada arrived in good condition, and netted producers 2s. a dozen. By having opposite seasons, and on account of the shortness of the sea trip necessary, it is quite possible that Canada may be able to take any surplus of eggs likely to be produced in New Zealand. It will, however, be time enough to think about an export trade when the local demand is satisfied.

With a more assured and cheaper food-supply—at any rate as far as oats are concerned—and the restrictions placed on the Asiatic egg-pulp, there is a good prospect of the flocks of the Dominion being increased, and the industry regaining its pre-war level of importance. It will probably take another hatching season before cheap eggs may be looked for. As in the past, we must look to the small settler on the land to increase his flocks, and to feed and manage them in a proper manner. The fact of the low market value ruling for many lines of farm-produce will necessarily tend towards more attention being given to the despised hen-run. It will usually be found that the smaller the settler the greater is the number of birds kept *pro rata*, and the better the attention they receive. Thus the greater the growth of small settlement the greater will the industry increase in importance. Poultry-keeping as a side line, whether it be with the small farmer or the suburban resident, is the surest and best means by which the industry can be built up. Poultry-farming as a safe means of making a livelihood is all right in its way, but if permanent success is to be attained the person in charge must have special qualifications, which few individuals possess. It is safe to assume that if all, or even the majority, of the poultry stock in the Dominion was of the correct laying-type, and was fed and managed in a proper manner, the question of importing eggs would probably be unheard of. In view of this, the distribution of high-type laying-stock, and a real live policy of giving instruction in the managing of poultry on sound lines, appears to be the great present-day essential.

RABBIT NUISANCE.

The administration of the Rabbit Nuisance Act has been carried on with energy throughout the year, but the weather conditions militated considerably against a reduction of the pest to the extent desired. During the present autumn, however, conditions for poisoning became better, and where this was taken full advantage of the pest has been reduced to an extent almost marvellous. Especially is this noticeable in the rabbit-infested districts of the Auckland Province, where their ravages were threatening to become quite as bad, if not already so, as some of the worst-infested districts of the South. The good work done is being followed up by settlers in the use of carbon bisulphide, with excellent results. As regards the work of destruction in the South Island, I am afraid that such good results as are being obtained in the North cannot be reported to apply here, the opposition to the Department's policy, which has always been more or less prominent in Otago in particular, having added to the difficulties surrounding this problem. I feel certain that had the same spirit existed in the South at the beginning of this campaign as that found in the North the pest in the South Island would have shown the same favourable position which is to be found, as a whole, in the North. I unhesitatingly attribute this better condition to the fact that the settlers, being honestly desirous of seeing the last of the rabbit, if such a consummation be possible, recognized that the Department must have the power bestowed by the 1918 amendment to the Act, and determined to do their utmost to work in with the Department's officers. The result is apparent to any one who is conversant with the past conditions and who sees that country to-day. The Department has continued its policy of supplying, at a price now much below cost, phosphorized pollard and oats; and it also supplies large quantities of strychnine and carbon bisulphide. Supplies of phosphorus are also always available for sale, but the quantity sold is not large, as the manufactured article is preferred. Prosecutions to the number of 163 were found necessary during the year, Auckland and Otago contributing the greater number. In most districts Magistrates have looked upon the offence as a serious one, and inflicted fines accordingly.

I append hereunder the reports made by the District Superintendents on this work in the respective parts of the Dominion controlled by them :—

Dunedin.—It was freely contended by many landowners, rabbit-exporters, and rabbiters that the high prices ruling for rabbits and rabbit-skins last season would have a great effect on the state of the pest during spring and summer. This, however (although abnormally high prices were reached), has not been borne out. As a matter of fact no material improvement appears to have taken place, and the pest is still very numerous over a large area of country. Until united systematic and thorough action is adopted by landowners generally we will continue to be faced with the same unsatisfactory conditions. Unfortunately, many landowners seem quite indifferent to the ravages of the pest, and their greatest trouble seems to be how best to evade the provisions of the Act until some one comes along and offers to do their rabbiting at no initial cost to themselves. At the present time various methods of rabbit-destruction are carried on by individuals, but in few cases are simultaneous steps adopted. Thorough poisoning with phosphorized or strychnine baits—pollard, oats, carrots, turnips, or apples—in the early spring or mid-autumn, followed up by fumigating with smoke or carbon bisulphide and thoroughly blocking burrows, and destroying cover, are the best-known means by which we can expect to effectively control and eventually reduce the pest to a minimum, the carrying-out of the whole operations to be done entirely under close and strict supervision by practical men. Prosecutions for the year totalled 124, and fines ranging from 10s. to £100, with costs, have been imposed. The formation of Rabbit Boards now appears to appeal to a certain class of the farming community, and I believe that quite a number of meetings are being convened in different parts to put the matter in motion; no doubt this is being brought about by the substantial fines imposed in many cases. The Rabbit Nuisance Amendment Act of 1920, increasing the power to levy rates on an acreage basis, is a decided improvement so far as it applies to low-valued lands. The manufacture and sales of phosphorized pollard and oats at Invercargill, Lawrence, and Ranfurly depots is still going on pending the erection of a central depot in Dunedin. The following are the 1920-21