

Rabbit Nuisance.—The control of the rabbit pest by the Department was the subject of considerable agitation in a number of rabbit-infested districts in Otago during the year, and, although some very good work has been done in this and other districts, the results in some cases have been disappointing. Very good results have been obtained in the rabbit-infested districts south of Auckland, where the pest had gained a considerable hold. Special investigations were made as to the extent of the spread of the pest in the North Auckland district, and while rabbits are fairly well established in some of the localities, the position is now being taken in hand. The practice of supplying phosphorized pollard and oats, and also phosphorus, strychnine, and carbon bisulphide, has been continued, and very considerable increases have taken place in the quantities sold. The selling-price of phosphorized pollard was increased during the year by 1d. per pound. The increase was rendered necessary as the selling-price had been considerably below the actual manufactured cost, and a substantial loss was being incurred yearly at the Department's depots in consequence. It is not anticipated that the present price will do more than allow the accounts to balance. An amendment to the Rabbit Nuisance Act passed during the 1921–22 session removed from section 2 of the Amendment Act of 1918 the words "to the satisfaction of the Inspector" and "in the opinion of the Inspector," to which great objection has been taken in some parts. It was found necessary during the year to institute sixty-three prosecutions for failure to comply with the provisions of the Act.

DAIRY DIVISION.

The Dairy Division, in charge of Mr. W. M. Singleton, Director, has dealt with a largely increased volume of work.

The Season and Production.—Every dairy district in the Dominion experienced a season particularly favourable to an abundant growth of feed for dairy cattle. In most districts the winter of 1921 was mild, and a comparatively plentiful supply of feed during that period ensured the cows coming into profit in good condition in the spring. Owing to copious rains throughout the summer, the succulence of the pasture was unusually well maintained, and the cows thus received a good chance to maintain their yield.

The production as represented by the grading figures shows an increase of 31·25 per cent. for butter and a decrease of 1·94 per cent. for cheese. The slight decrease on cheese is merely due to market fluctuations, and the consequent changing over in a number of districts from the manufacture of cheese to butter. The following table shows the respective gradings for the years ended the 31st March, 1922 and 1921 :—

Quantities of Butter and Cheese forwarded to Grading-stores for Grading.

Port.	Year 1921–22.		Year 1920–21.	
	Butter.	Cheese.	Butter.	Cheese.
	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.
Auckland	490,646	176,180	360,686	256,227
Gisborne	11,172	..	5,868	..
New Plymouth	90,301	197,008	71,038	201,394
Patea	26,838	254,346	36,830	223,783
Wanganui	22,188	15,540	18,633	15,880
Wellington	157,119	300,447	110,995	309,098
Lyttelton	42,557	36,001	40,634	40,884
Timaru	1,748	7,759	..	..
Dunedin	24,812	43,113	20,362	49,656
Bluff	14,972	175,947	7,012	133,376
Totals	882,353	1,206,341	672,058	1,230,298

Butter.—The quality of creamery butter has been well maintained, and in a number of districts has actually improved. Of the 1,554,932 boxes of creamery butter exported to Britain, 1,463,881 boxes were first grade, 90,905 second grade, and 146 third grade.

Water-content: Butters coming from well-equipped and well-managed factories as a rule show a suitable percentage and uniformity of water-content. There are however, a number of managers who have too little regard for their responsibilities. Their butter may be found containing too little water one day and too much the next. Such management is costly to the dairy factory and a menace to the industry. The Graders have found it necessary to exert the greatest care in not passing butters containing moisture in excess of the legal limit. It would appear that provision will shortly have to be made to enable a greater number of samples to be tested, and severe penalties inflicted in cases where butter forwarded for grading and export is found to contain more than the legal limit of 16 per cent. of water.

Cheese.—The cheese which came forward for grading during the season 1921–22 in most districts showed some improvement in quality over that of preceding seasons. Of a total of 955,729 crates of cheese exported to Britain during the year ended 31st March, 1922, 898,607 were first grade, 56,813 second grade, and 309 third grade. There is still room for considerable improvement in the dressing of the cheese. Much cheese showed evidence of insufficient pressing before dressing, and also of