

- (b.) The Statistician collects as at 31st January the total number of sheep and lambs, and this forms a useful comparison.
- (c.) On 30th April the dipping has been finished, the autumn muster over, the bulk of the buying and selling has been done for the season, and the sheep turned out for the winter; an accurate return is therefore given; and, most important, a correct return of ewes put to the ram is available. Using these figures and estimating the lambing percentages, forecasts of the number of lambs have been made which have proved wonderfully accurate in the past.

After discussing the matter at some length with the secretary of the Sheepowners' Federation and the Director-General of Agriculture, the Board finally decided to recommend that the date for collection be altered from the 30th April to the 30th June.

FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE.

During the year the Board watched carefully the incidence of foot-and-mouth disease in Great Britain, the United States of America, and the Continent of Europe. Quite recently requests for the removal of the embargo against the importation of cattle from Scotland, and the importation of products of the soil from certain States in the United States of America, were considered by the Board; but it was decided that, in view of the serious nature of the disease, and the great loss which would arise should it find its way to the Dominion, the time had not arrived for withdrawing the present restrictions. It was, however, suggested that consideration might be given to the modification of the provisions relating to the importation of seeds from the United States of America, and this suggestion has since been acted upon.

AGRICULTURAL GRADUATES LAND SETTLEMENT ACT (SOUTH AUSTRALIA).

At the request of the Royal Agricultural Society, consideration was given to the advisability of introducing into the Dominion legislation similar to the Agricultural Graduates Land Settlement Act, 1922, of South Australia; but members generally considered that it was desirable to secure additional information before arriving at a definite conclusion on the subject. The Department of Agriculture was therefore requested to secure from the South Australian authorities a report concerning the working of the Act in that State. The Board was subsequently informed that a communication had been received from the Director of the Department of Agriculture, Adelaide, advising that little advantage had been taken of the provisions of the Act, only two applications for assistance having been made, both of which, it is understood, have been satisfactory to the applicants. A copy of the Act has also come to hand, and the matter will be further considered by the Board in due course.

DAIRY CATTLE IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1921 (SOUTH AUSTRALIA).

The remit of the Royal Agriculture Society requesting that the Department of Agriculture be asked to devise a scheme for the elimination of scrub bulls, on the lines of the scheme in operation in South Australia, was also discussed; but consideration of the matter was postponed pending receipt of further information, which the Department of Agriculture was asked to secure, concerning the working of the Dairy Cattle Improvement Act in South Australia. The Director of the Department of Agriculture in Adelaide was accordingly written to, and has replied in the following terms:—

“As to the Dairy Cattle Improvement Act, it has, in our opinion, proved very advantageous to local dairymen. Under this Act all bulls over six months old have been compulsorily licensed every year, enabling us to accumulate a sum of money which has been specially earmarked for the improvement of the dairying industry. Among the improvements brought about have been assistance towards the purchase of purebred pedigreed bulls of approved milking ancestry. This assistance has taken the form of a 60-per-cent. subsidy, payable from this fund. Together with the two Acts for which you have asked, I attach herewith regulations governing this subsidy scheme. In addition, the cost of assistance to herd-testing associations has been defrayed from this fund. I have pleasure also in enclosing copy regulations concerning herd-testing scheme.”

There has been no meeting of the Board of Agriculture since the receipt of this information, but the matter will be further dealt with at an early date.

DAMAGE TO HIDES BY FIRE BRANDING.

The Director-General of Agriculture submitted for the information and consideration of the Board correspondence which had taken place with the secretary of the New Zealand Tanners' Association regarding the damage caused to hides by fire branding. I was agreed that the present system of branding resulted in considerable loss to the producers, and the Board decided to recommend that all branding be done on the neck or shoulder.

COST OF PRODUCTION OF PRIMARY PRODUCTS.

The question of securing and compiling accurate data as to the cost of production of wool, butter, cheese, and other primary products, in order that the producers' position might be better understood, was discussed with the officers of the Department of Agriculture, and the Board generally approved of the work recently initiated in this connection by the Fields Division of the Department. At the present time sufficient data has not been obtained to enable any public statement to be made on the question, though a great deal of valuable information has already been secured.