

In the matter of amended or new regulations, an Order in Council was gazetted in January dealing with labelling of preservative substances sold for the purpose of being added or applied to food, requiring that the name of the active ingredient shall be declared; the labelling of so-called "essences" used as artificial food colours or flavours or for making beverages; defining milk-bread; permitting the use of harmless colouring in meat-pastes; defining conditions for keeping milk-samples prior to the application of the reductase test, and describing the method of applying the test; limiting to two parts per centum the amount of starch to be used in icing-sugar; permitting the use of two parts per centum of cornflour as "stiffening" in ice-cream; revoking the regulation formerly providing for "fruit-jelly crystals," and prohibiting the use of pictures or devices suggesting fruit on ordinary jelly crystals; limiting to 50 grains to the gallon the presence of salt in beer; and making general provisions regarding the labelling of cordials and beverages, including special provisions to prevent the splitting up of prescribed names and descriptions by the use of various ground colours and different styles of overprinting obviously intended to make one word more or less prominent than another.

Conferences have been held with representatives of various associations and traders to discuss problems that have arisen, and generally to give advice or guidance as to the aims and desires of the Department. Much discussion has taken place on the proposed Soap Regulations, and it is hoped to finalize this matter very soon.

During the ensuing year it is hoped that Parliament will pass a Dangerous Drugs Act. There are no insuperable difficulties in the way, and legislation in this direction is highly desirable.

It is desired to express again the fullest appreciation of the co-operation of the Customs Department and the Dominion Laboratory. The Dominion Analyst now has branches established at Auckland and Christchurch, and will, it is understood, further extend in the near future the useful activities of his Laboratory.

STAFF.

The staff of Medical Officers of Health has been increased by the appointment of Dr. Dawson as assistant to Dr. Telford at Christchurch.

Mr. Armitage, Government Bacteriologist, joined the staff of the Auckland Hospital Board on the passing over of the control of the Auckland Laboratory to that body. As Government Bacteriologist Mr. Armitage rendered enthusiastic and valuable service to the Department.

Mr. A. Von Keisenberg, who had filled with distinction the position of Inspecting Accountant, resigned from the Department to take up an appointment of secretary to the newly formed New Zealand Hospital Boards Association.

As in previous years, the staff rendered loyal and efficient service, for which I wish to express my sincere appreciation.

T. H. A. VALINTINE,
Director-General of Health.

PART II.—PUBLIC HYGIENE.

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ended 31st March, 1926.

SECTION I.—VITAL STATISTICS.

POPULATION.

The mean population of the Dominion for 1925 (exclusive of Maoris) was estimated to be 1,329,756. This total represents an increase over the corresponding figure for the previous year of 31,121, or a percentage increase of population of 2·40.

BIRTHS.

The births of 28,153 living children were registered in the Dominion during 1925, as against 28,014, in 1924. The birth-rate for 1925 was thus 21·17 per 1,000 of mean population.

The general course of the birth-rate during the last ten years is shown in the following table :—

Births (Number and Rate) in New Zealand, 1916–25.

Year.	Total Number of Births registered.	Birth-rate per 1,000 of Mean Population.
1916	28,509	25·94
1917	28,239	25·69
1918	25,860	23·44
1919	24,483	21·42
1920	29,921	25·09
1921	28,567	23·34
1922	29,006	23·17
1923	27,967	21·94
1924	28,014	21·57
1925	28,153	21·17

The birth-rate for 1925 is the lowest ever recorded in the Dominion.