

LIVE-STOCK DIVISION.

REPORT OF J. LYONS, M.R.C.V.S., DIRECTOR.

STOCK CONDITIONS GENERALLY.

While the winter of 1925 was a satisfactory one and stock came through it fairly well, the months which followed did not bring good spring conditions, making the season a late and a trying one. The absence of adequate supplies of food to meet adverse conditions such as those experienced was badly felt in all parts of the Dominion, and stock-owners, particularly dairy-farmers, should profit from the experience and endeavour in the future to save abundant feed to meet such contingencies. One of the great wants, to my mind, in the wintering of stock in New Zealand is the neglect to maintain them in proper condition throughout the winter months. The animals would easily repay their owners the extra care required, and in any case it is surely no more than is due to them. In these days when higher average returns are aimed at it is imperative that the animals be well cared for or the returns will not be realized, nor will constitution be maintained. What I have said applies equally to the care of the calf—the future member of the dairy herd—which is far from what it should be. Mention of this has become almost a hardy annual, but it is year by year becoming more necessary that the Department enter upon a crusade in the interests of one of the greatest producers of the wealth of the country.

STOCK DISEASES.

The stock of the Dominion have remained free of any of the more serious contagious diseases which exist in most other countries, and every precaution has been maintained in the direction of safeguarding the Dominion against any such catastrophe. Owing to the continued outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease in England, the introduction of sheep and cattle from Great Britain and Ireland is still prohibited. The necessity for this is regretted, as it is well recognized that breeders must from time to time be able to introduce fresh blood in order that their flocks and herds may be maintained, but in a case like this the continuance of the prohibition has been the only safe course to follow.

The following are my comments in regard to the diseases to which stock in New Zealand are subject:—

Blackleg.—This disease is still confined to the Taranaki district and to a portion of the Auckland Province. Inoculation of calves in the latter district is only carried out in cases where the disease has been confirmed, but in Taranaki the practice has been to vaccinate independently of whether outbreaks have been reported. The number of calves vaccinated during the year in Taranaki was 32,389, being an increase of 3,128 on the previous year. In remarking on the matter, the District Superintendent, Wellington, makes the following comment, which I commend for consideration, as from the experience gained of the result of a similar policy in the Auckland District I am satisfied it is in the best interests of all concerned: “I think the time has arrived when a relaxation in the regulations dealing with this disease could very well be introduced in Taranaki, on similar lines to the procedure adopted in the Auckland District. The number of actual deaths reported as due to blackleg is very small compared with the volume of work entailed in general vaccination. No case of blackleg has occurred in the Hawera District for over three years. In this connection Inspector Ford, Hawera, remarks, ‘The present attitude of the majority of farmers in regard to vaccination would seem to be that the time could be more profitably used at some other work than general vaccination of calves for the prevention of blackleg.’”

Contagious Mammitis.—This disease has again been prevalent in dairying districts, although it would not appear to have been so troublesome as in the past. It is reported as having appeared to some extent in Otago and Southland, but mostly in the dairy herds of Southland. The Canterbury - West Coast district is comparatively free from the contagious form, but cases of the non-contagious form of mammitis have been noted. In all dairying districts in the North Island the disease is more or less prevalent, but, as stated, not to the same extent as in the past. Proprietary vaccines have been used fairly freely throughout the dairying districts as a prophylactic, and the results are being carefully watched, not with a desire to condemn, but in order that we might ascertain if they have any value as a prophylactic against this disease. The Department is unable, up to the present, to report in favour of this form of treatment. In some herds where inoculation had been practised the owners claimed an improvement as a result, but as in some cases adjoining owners had had similar experiences without the use of vaccine the claim is not substantiated. The present position, then, appears to be that generally immunity has not been conferred, and results are far from indicating any conclusive evidence of the efficacy of the particular vaccines in question. The number of samples of milk received at the Department's Veterinary Laboratory for examination for contagious mammitis was 2,097, being an increase of 484 over the previous year. Of this number 1,178, or 56.2 per cent. were found to contain the specific organism. The increase in samples, no doubt, arose on account of a greater amount of publicity centred on this disease during the earlier part of the year and as a result of lectures and general advice by veterinary officers.

Tuberculosis.—The condemnations of cattle on clinical examination and as the result of the tuberculin test numbered 4,692, being a decrease on the previous year's figures of 189. The distribution of the stock condemned for this disease was as follows: Auckland, 2,852; Wellington, (including Taranaki and Hawke's Bay), 1,308; Canterbury - West Coast, 367; Otago - South-