

arriving from the Dominion during the 1926 export season. Under the Fruit Control Act, 1924, the export of fruit, with the exception of that from Otago, is controlled by the Board. The Board has not yet set up offices of its own, but is working in co-operation with the New Zealand Fruitgrowers' Federation, and has employed that body to attend to all shipping matters in which the Board is interested. The Board so far has not interfered to any great extent with fruit shipments other than to secure and allot all space required, and to provide special conditions, such as the use of the universal label, printed wrapping-papers, and the precooling of fruit prior to shipment, facilities for which the Board has brought about by arrangement with the Wellington Harbour Board.

LOCAL MARKETS.

The inspection of New-Zealand-grown fruit at shops and auction-marts has been carried out during the year. Satisfactory prices were realized on the local markets for all varieties of stone and small fruits and the earlier varieties of apples and pears. The market was, however, oversupplied for a time with cool-stored fruit, a good deal of which opened up in an inferior condition, consequently the prices received were not remunerative to the grower. There was also a tendency on the part of a number of growers to forward low-grade fruit and black-spot lines, the returns for which would hardly pay for the cost of marketing.

The branding of cases is a matter which leaves room for improvement. A good many growers fail to realize that neat, methodical branding of cases attracts the eye of the keen prospective buyer, who has learned by experience that the grower who goes to a little trouble to brand his cases in an attractive manner is usually careful to see that the grade and pack of fruit is right, and that the contents are consistent with the branding.

There is a continued improvement noticeable in the packing of strawberries offered for sale in punnets, the regulations brought into operation last season having had a beneficial effect both for the producer and consumer.

Numerous acts on the part of the seller with intent to deceive the purchaser have again been noted on the various auction markets. These almost invariably consist of what is known as topping—i.e., placing extremely good specimens of the particular class of vegetable in such a position as to suggest that a very high class package or line is being offered, whereas the bulk below the exposed surface is composed of inferior rubbish. The same practice applies to a lesser extent to fruit. It is highly desirable that some action be taken toward stopping this practice.

INSTRUCTIONAL AND EXPERIMENTAL WORK.

The majority of growers whose business is to produce fruit on a commercial scale are reasonably diligent and successful in combating orchard pests and diseases. There are, however, a number—chiefly those with whom fruitgrowing is only a side line—who either by negligence or lack of knowledge of orchard-management fail to take the necessary steps to control disease, &c. The work of education and elimination which the Division is carrying on through its Orchard Instructors is, however, gradually reducing the number of neglected orchards. Much of the time of the Instructors is devoted to instructional work by means of public demonstrations and lectures, visits to orchards and packing-sheds, and correspondence.

Classes in the grading and packing of apples were continued during the year in the main commercial centres, and were well patronized. A number of those attending these classes gained the Department's certificates of competency in apple grading and packing. Examinations in pruning and spraying were also conducted, a fair percentage of the candidates being successful.

The carrying-out of tests with various spraying-compounds has been attended to, as far as it has been possible to do so, in co-operation with reliable orchardists.

An experiment in the manurial treatment of fruit-trees is being conducted in the Marlborough District. Definite results in respect to this will not be available for some time yet. The matter of establishing an experimental area in the vicinity of Whangarei for the purpose of testing the suitability of that district for the growing of subtropical fruits was taken in hand during the year. This should prove of considerable interest when the plot is properly established. The co-operative fruit-testing areas at Tanekaha (North Auckland), planted in mixed fruit-trees, and Henderson (Auckland), which is devoted to citrus-growing, are making satisfactory progress, and will be the subject of separate reports when the final results are available. The apple-trees on the Wallaceville test plot are still making very satisfactory progress and returning heavy crops. During the year grafts were made of some thirteen new varieties, and so far these are doing well.

FRUIT COOL STORAGE.

The cool storage of fruit is a matter that has made considerable headway during recent years, with the result that at the present time large and up-to-date fruit cool stores are to be found in each of the chief commercial fruitgrowing districts. During the year further cool-storage accommodation was erected in the Hawke's Bay District. A further extension is also noticeable in the number of small cool stores erected by growers for their own use. The capacity of the bulk of the stores was fully taxed during the season, and while the greater portion of the fruit kept in good condition, some was held in store too long, resulting in considerable loss to growers and dissatisfaction to purchasers.

Less trouble has been experienced with flesh-collapse in apples. The continued investigations carried out by Mr. R. Waters of the Biological Laboratory, with the assistance of officers attached to this Division, have been of considerable help in reducing this trouble in cool-stored fruit. The investigations have been extended to cover the cool storage of pears.