

DAIRY DIVISION.

REPORT OF W. M. SINGLETON, DIRECTOR.

THE SEASON.

Weather conditions during the year have, on the whole, been excellent from a dairying standpoint. Favoured with a fairly mild spring and a regular rainfall throughout the summer months, in most districts there has been an abundance of succulent feed available for dairy cattle, thus ensuring a high production of butterfat.

Hay crops have been exceptionally good, root crops are fairly plentiful, and it is anticipated that dairy cows will commence their next lactation period in excellent condition.

PRODUCTION.

It is satisfactory to record that the production of butterfat exceeded that of the previous year, and came within a few tons of equalling the 1924-25 record year, favourable weather conditions, together with an increased area of pastures top-dressed with fertilizers, being influencing factors to this end. It is anticipated that the actual dairy year which closes on the 31st July next will show a small margin in production over the peak dairy year ending July, 1925.

QUALITY OF BUTTER.

Probably during no period in the history of dairying in New Zealand has the quality of butter shown such a satisfactory improvement as during the past year. Contributing factors towards this have been the introduction of a "finest" grade, differential advances by the Control Board for the different grades of butter; the compulsory grading of cream; improved methods in the collection of cream in some districts; prizes offered by the Dairy-produce Control Board to dairy companies showing the greatest improvement in their average grade; farm dairy instruction; and the keenness on the part of dairy-factory staffs to turn out a high-quality article.

There is a general inclination amongst managers to use less material in partially neutralizing the acidity in cream, and complaints of "soda" flavour are now rarely heard. The body and texture of the majority of our butter is of a highly uniform character and the moisture is evenly distributed.

WHEY BUTTER.

The quality of this class of butter has evidenced some improvement. Extra care has been taken in the handling of whey cream, but further efforts on the part of some of our cheese-factory managers is desirable in this connection to enable buttermakers to manufacture a higher-quality article. The elimination of "press fat" from this product, as provided for in the Dairy Regulations gazetted on the 25th November last, has had a desirable effect on quality.

QUALITY OF CHEESE.

The quality of cheese justifies a good deal of satisfaction. As in the case of butter, factors have been in operation which have tended to induce suppliers to forward a better quality of raw product, and to encourage factory-managers and assistants to put forward greater efforts to turn out the best quality possible. Some of the troubles experienced in past years, such as slimy milk, and milk in which the development of lactic acid is a difficulty, were much less in evidence during the season.

The finish of our cheese still shows improvement, and the use of a cheese-hoop which enables factory-managers to turn out a rimless cheese is becoming more general.

The pasteurization of milk for cheesemaking is steadily becoming more general, the quantity of cheese so manufactured being equal to 86 per cent. of the output, as against 76 per cent. the previous year. Further installations of plant are contemplated during the winter.

STORAGE OF CHEESE AND BUTTER.

The storage of cheese and butter prior to shipment now gives general satisfaction. All cheese is pre-cooled, and, generally speaking, butter is held at suitable temperatures. Attention to temperatures at time of shipment is given by the graders in charge, and the shipping companies give this matter special attention during loading operations. The shipping supervisor of the Dairy-produce Control Board pays special attention to the suitability of storage conditions on Home steamers.