

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL.

THE HON. THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

Wellington, 30th June, 1927.

I have the honour to report as follows upon the work of the Department during the past official year :—

All administrative work has been carried out well by the responsible officers entrusted with its various branches, and side by side with this the instructional services, and the experimental and investigation work associated with them, have been further extended. Of late years the development of the Department's work has been largely upon the instructional side, in an endeavour to meet the always-increasing desire on the part of producers for further knowledge regarding the principles of all branches of agricultural science applicable to their practical farming operations for the purpose of obtaining the best results from them. The practice adopted is, broadly speaking, carried out on three lines—firstly, by lectures and demonstrations at farmers' gatherings, this including the winter "farm schools," organized by the Fields Division, which extend over periods varying from one to six days at each centre, at which officers skilled in various subjects impart information; secondly, by experimental and demonstration work on selected land in various districts, and on Government farms or farm areas; and, thirdly, by officers carrying their knowledge and their instruction service direct to the producer himself on his own farm, station, orchard, poultry-run, garden, apiary, &c., or to dairy factories.

In this work field officers of all Divisions take part, and while those of the Fields Division give their time wholly to experimental, instructional, and investigational work, the Veterinarians and Inspectors of the Live-stock Division, the Dairy Instructors and Farm Dairy Instructors of the Dairy Division, together with the Orchard Instructors and Apiary Instructors of the Horticulture Division, largely combine administrative with instructional work, and this combination has proved most valuable in both directions, these officers, as a result of their willingness to give advice and assistance, being now looked upon usually as friends whose presence is welcomed. There are perhaps occasions in rabbit or noxious-weed infested districts where the conscientious performance of necessary official inspection duty creates temporary irritation, but even this is yearly becoming less apparent.

Closely linked up with the farm, factory, and orchard instruction services are the departmental laboratories, that at Wallaceville dealing with animal-disease and dairying matters, while the Chemical and Biological Laboratories in Wellington get through a large volume of work connected with their respective branches of scientific activities. The bulk of the work of these laboratories is done in direct association with the field or factory officers, who refer to the laboratory concerned all questions which they are unable themselves to deal with directly from their own knowledge, thus enabling the necessary examinations to be made of material sent, or investigations to be carried out for the advice and guidance of the field officer requiring the information. This intimate combination of field and laboratory services is carried out in the best spirit of team-work, and it constitutes the keystone, so to speak, of whatever degree of merit the advisory and research work of the Department may be considered to have attained.

The year has been a busy one for all branches of the Department, as will be gathered from the reports following, which cover the activities of each Division, &c. It has been necessary to make staff increases, principally in the Fields Division, in the endeavour particularly to meet the demands upon the instructional and investigational services; but in the present stage of development of our rural industries increased services of the right type are necessary, and there is still room for further expansion as men of the right stamp for the work become available.

LIVE-STOCK.

The field officers of the Live-stock Division, both Veterinarians and Inspectors of Stock, have maintained a close supervision over the health of farm-stock in their respective districts, and no outbreaks of contagious disease of a serious character have occurred during the year, the general health of live-stock having been good. Drought conditions over a portion of the Hawke's Bay Province were responsible for a good deal of loss during the 1925-26 season, but at the time of writing the feed conditions are much better than was the case twelve months previously. In some other North Island areas attention has had to be given to the improvement of pasture conditions where soil-deficiencies exist, in order to ensure sound health and proper development in cattle and sheep,