

LIVE-STOCK DIVISION.

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

STOCK CONDITIONS GENERALLY.

Weather conditions experienced during the year were good, and following on a mild winter an excellent and early spring brought the stock on in good condition. A too-rapid growth of feed in some districts was not advantageous from the point of view of maintaining sheep in the best condition of health, but, on the other hand, a good supply of winter feed is assured, and stockowners should be able to do their stock well through the coming winter. Stock have remained in good health, and no serious mortality has taken place, although in some instances trouble has been experienced of parasitic gastritis in young cattle, as mentioned later in the report. In the maintenance of the stock of the Dominion in good health it cannot be too strongly emphasized that weakness of constitution must be avoided by selecting only strong-constituted animals for retention as the future producers of the Dominion, and doing them well during their growing and also producing period. It is altogether wrong that a producing animal should be turned out at the end of the season to winter as best it may, and be hardly given another thought until brought in again for the next season's milking, low in condition and unable to produce its maximum owing to lowered vitality. Such treatment—it is fortunately becoming less common—is bad in every way, as after a season of production the cow needs good treatment during her period of recuperation if she is to give her best return.

The principal diseases and troubles affecting stock in New Zealand are dealt with under their respective headings as follows:—

Blackleg.—Owing to the steady campaign carried out by officers of the Department against blackleg in parts of the Taranaki and Auckland Provinces the position in recent years has become less acute, and the mortality amongst young stock has been reduced to such an extent that it was possible during recent years to relax the regulations in the Auckland District, so that calves were only inoculated on farms where an outbreak of the disease took place. As a result of the experience gained in the Auckland District the same methods were during the past season introduced into the Taranaki District and were found to work satisfactorily. Our present system, while safeguarding the health of stock, has been an enormous saving in labour both to officers of the Department and stockowners in the district. The regulations with regard to removing stock from the district is still in force.

Tuberculosis.—An examination of the whole position as regards tuberculosis in animals in New Zealand indicates that the incidence of tubercular disease in cattle and pigs in New Zealand would appear to be decreasing, although there are still some districts possessing low, wet, and swampy areas where the disease is prevalent to a greater extent than elsewhere, and until better conditions can be brought about by means of drainage, &c., improvement will be difficult in these districts. The condemnations of cattle on clinical examination and as a result of the tuberculin test numbered 4,750, as against 4,692 last year. This constant weeding-out of clinically affected animals must be an important factor in controlling the disease and in gradually reducing its incidence. Wellington District, embracing all the North Island outside Auckland Province and including Nelson and Marlborough, shows a decrease of 198, and Canterbury - West Coast District shows a decrease of sixty-six compared with the previous year, while Auckland and Otago Districts show increases of 280 and forty-two respectively. The increase in the Auckland District can be traced as having taken place in low-lying swampy areas already referred to, and Otago's increase is attributable to reactions as a result of the tuberculin test and confined to a few herds. The number of cattle (including calves) examined at freezing-works and abattoirs on slaughter was 321,039, of which 16,333, or 5·08 per cent., were found to be affected in varying degrees, a considerable number only very slightly. These figures show a decrease of 0·08 per cent. on last year's figures, and, although small, it is nevertheless satisfactory, following as it does on the somewhat larger decrease which was shown for the preceding year. In the case of swine a decrease of 0·35 per cent. is disclosed, which is also a satisfactory feature. The number of swine examined was 418,316, of which 34,405, or 8·22 per cent., were found to be affected in varying degrees, and, as in the case of cattle, a considerable number only very slightly.

Actinomycosis.—The number of cases of this disease dealt with throughout the Dominion was 689, being a decrease of sixty-five on the previous year. They were distributed as follows: Otago-Southland, 77; Canterbury - West Coast, 57; Wellington, 208; Auckland, 347. All districts, with the exception of Otago-Southland, which shows an increase of twenty-four, shared in the decrease. Medicinal treatment is advised for this disease when detected in the early stages, and as a result many animals have been saved from condemnation.

Mammitis.—This disease, although not so prevalent as in former years, is still a serious menace to the dairy-farmer, and the field officers of the Division are using every effort to assist farmers in combating it, while the Wallaceville Laboratory staff are investigating and exploring new and better methods of treatment. Experiments carried out in some cases showed good results, but these were far from being constant, and more investigation work has to be done both in New Zealand and in other countries. Proprietary vaccines for preventive treatment are still in use in dairying districts. Officers of the Department have been keenly interested in their use, with the view to finding if they were successful as a preventive agent. While in some cases owners claim satisfactory results, the