

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL.

THE HON. THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

Wellington, 30th June, 1928.

I beg to submit the following report on the work of the Department during the past year :—

As will be gathered from the accompanying reports of the Divisional Directors and other responsible officers, a great volume of work has been done and the instructional activities have been further extended. In these divisional reports will be found information covering the whole of the activities of the Department.

The legislation relating to agricultural colleges passed during the 1926 and 1927 sessions has opened up a new era in agricultural education and a wider distribution of research into agricultural problems. It has been the aim of the Department to work in as close co-operation as possible with the two agricultural colleges, as well as with the Cawthron Institute and other establishments where work associated with the industries of the land is carried out.

THE FIELDS DIVISION.

The establishment of a plant-breeding and plant-disease research station on the Massey College land at Palmerston North has necessitated a considerable readjustment in connection with the Fields Division. An important section of this Division is the staff of the Biological Laboratory, hitherto housed in Wellington in premises which have become entirely inadequate. Moreover, the absence of available land for experimental purposes has become a serious drawback. It was therefore decided to avoid the expense in buildings and extra staff which would be involved by the erection of a new laboratory near Wellington, and to make such arrangements as would enable the new station at Palmerston North to be available for the Department's Biological Laboratory staff.

The Director of the Fields Division, while continuing to carry out the duties of this position, will act also as Director of the new station, and in order to enable this to be done efficiently the whole of the headquarters staff of the Division, as well as the Biological Laboratory staff, are being transferred to Palmerston North, where suitable office and temporary laboratory accommodation has been secured in the town. It is hoped that this arrangement will operate satisfactorily.

A readjustment of the field organization of the Division is also in progress, four district staffs being established each with a supervising officer in local control.

LIVE-STOCK.

The appended report from the Director of the Live-stock Division furnishes a comprehensive statement of the activities of that Division during the year, and of the position regarding live-stock and live-stock products generally. In the matter of animal health the position of freedom from many serious diseases has been maintained, while those diseases existing in the Dominion have been kept well under control.

The unusually dry summer brought about some falling-off of milk-yield in dairy herds, but this was compensated for to some extent by the favourable autumn conditions, and the total season's yield of dairy-products was a very good one. The average yield of dairy cows continues to increase, and the standard of quality of the dairy herds from a breeding viewpoint shows steady improvement.

The swine industry is growing, the number of pigs in the Dominion showing a notable increase. There is room for much improvement in swine-husbandry methods, and steps are in hand for establishing a more systematic instruction service in this and in animal husbandry generally. Apart from the feeding and management of pigs, more method in breeding is needed, so that a more uniform type can be produced for export purposes as well as for local needs. Seeing that the Berkshire breed is so predominant here in numbers, this need can best be met for the time being by crossbreeding with one of the best "long carcass" breeds.