

THE RABBIT NUISANCE.

The great improvement in the rabbit position is most satisfactory. While fully appreciating the fact that the market value of skins and the consequent wholesale destruction of rabbits has been a very important factor, it must be realized that the work of Rabbit Boards in districts where they are established has proved a notable feature in assisting to bring this about, while the strenuous and long-continued effort of the Department's Inspectors must also be given its full share of credit. The officers responsible for the control of rabbits and noxious weeds, in addition to their stock-inspection duties, have had to carry out arduous and often unpleasant duties, and credit is due to them for the tact and firmness they have almost invariably displayed and the thoroughness with which their work has been done.

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

How best to deal with noxious weeds still constitutes an economic problem. Our Inspectors do their best, and farmers and others concerned have certainly shown a better feeling of co-operation, but a satisfactory solution yet remains to be found. A conference of North Island Rabbit Boards suggested that these Boards should also undertake noxious-weed inspection in their districts. The principle involved in this suggestion is well worth consideration, not only as regards its application to the localized districts covered by these Boards, but also from the wider standpoint of the Dominion as a whole. It is rather a big question, requiring careful examination in all its aspects.

THE VETERINARY LABORATORY.

The Live-stock Division report contains a concise but comprehensive statement of the operations of the Veterinary Laboratory, at Wallaceville, and the officers responsible for it are to be commended for the volume of work done and its results, together with the high standard of efficiency shown in carrying it out. The results attained have brought about an advancement of our knowledge regarding some phases of obscure animal-disease.

The accommodation at the Laboratory is becoming somewhat cramped and more space will need to be provided, together with one or two additions to the technical staff, which have become necessary in order to enable the increasing work connected with disease-investigation to be prosecuted satisfactorily, and necessary associated work in the form of parasitology, biochemistry, and dietetics generally to be carried out in a more systematic and thorough manner.

An important feature of the year's operations lies in the organized attack upon those baffling dairy-cow diseases, contagious abortion, sterility, and mammitis. Commenced three years ago and carried on by the close association of field officers with the Laboratory staff, this has become more systematized, and now it has been arranged that two of the most capable field investigators shall devote themselves exclusively to research into these diseases in collaboration with the Laboratory staff, while the whole of the field staff of the Division will assist to the extent permitted by their regular duties.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY.

Some temporary dislocation of the organization of the Animal Husbandry Branch, initiated early in the year, occurred consequent upon the officer in charge accepting a position at the Massey College. Steps have now been taken to establish this instruction service on a wider and more comprehensive scale than was originally contemplated, and it is hoped to be able to commence operations early in the coming spring.

THE DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

The Director and officers of the Dairy Division have had a somewhat strenuous year. The initiation of the compulsory cream-grading system threw a great deal of additional work upon them, which, however, was facilitated by the co-operation and support of the great majority of factories. Some difficulties occurred, but having regard to the nature of the work it can be said to have gone through well. A point of some importance which was raised was that there should be two grades instead of three. It is considered, however, that the three grades should continue—at any rate, until they have had a thorough trial over a longer period.

It is satisfactory that the quality of butter has been maintained, and, in the case of a number of factories, improved. Cheese quality, however, has shown some falling-off in certain districts. The seasonal conditions have been an important factor in this, but the position is having full attention.