

LIVE-STOCK DIVISION.

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

STOCK CONDITIONS GENERALLY.

The past season taken as a whole throughout the Dominion can be regarded as a prosperous one, although a number of districts, particularly Auckland and Taranaki, suffered rather severely from the prolonged dry weather, with the result that, owing to the shortage of feed, many herds went off their milk long before their accustomed period. On account of the drought extending into the late autumn the prospect of winter feed in such districts is not good, and, as many of our dairy-farmers were compelled to use the feed saved for winter in the late summer and autumn, it will be somewhat difficult for them to carry their stock through the season in satisfactory condition, unless the winter is an exceptionally mild one.

Unfortunately, the loss sustained during the dry season is not the only one. Animals after such a season are badly fitted to withstand the cold and wet of the winter following, with the result that they come to their next calving-period in anything but a fit condition to give of their best. It takes months of feeding during the then ensuing season to enable them to do so, and by that time the best of the milking season is over. I would again emphasize the necessity for keeping dairy stock in good healthy condition all the year round, and more particularly at that period when they are turned out, by providing sufficient food and shelter to enable them to come to the calving-period in such condition that an adequate return can be expected from the start. Some of our dairy-farmers fully realize this. There are many, however, who do not, and on such I would impress the necessity for maintaining an adequate food-supply for their herds throughout the season. If the necessity for this could be fully realized it would increase our annual export in butter and cheese by thousands of pounds.

Notwithstanding the fact that the season was not an ideal one so far as the dairy-farmer is concerned, production has been well maintained, and is well up to the standard of previous seasons. Good prices have been obtained for wool, lamb, and mutton, and the yield for cereal crops in the Canterbury District has been well above the average. This should place such settlers in a sounder position financially and enable them to improve the carrying-capacity of their holdings.

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

Mammitis.—With the exception of the Auckland districts the incidence of this disease throughout the Dominion has been less than in previous years. In the above-mentioned district no decline is apparent, the position being similar to that seen the previous year. This is worthy of special mention, in as far as the vaccine treatment is concerned. Had the claims made for the use of vaccine been substantiated one would have expected to see a reduction in the number of cases, this being the district where vaccine was first and most extensively used.

It is to be regretted that scientific workers in this and other countries have, so far, been unsuccessful in finding either a preventive or curative treatment for this complaint. Although no effort has been spared in this direction, we are no further forward from a practical point of view than we were twenty years ago. We still have to rely largely on preventive measures, and on the dairy-farmer being willing to undertake these. Where adopted, good results have followed; but, as the District Superintendent, Wellington, remarks, such precautionary measures are not always persevered with, the dairy-farmer trusting to luck or the use of some proprietary medicine to carry him through the season.

With a view to acquiring further knowledge of this and other diseases affecting dairy cows, officers are being relieved from their ordinary duties, and in conjunction with the Laboratory staff at Wallaceville are spending the whole of their time in investigating new and better methods of treatment. It is to be hoped that their labours will be crowned with success, and should further knowledge be acquired by the scientific workers of this or other countries it will be made available to those engaged in our dairying industry.

Tuberculosis.—With regard to this disease the position remains much the same as formerly, as far as cattle are concerned. This year a slight increase, amounting to eighty-nine in number, has to be recorded over last year's figures of all tubercular cattle condemned in the field. The condemnation of cattle on clinical examination and as a result of the tuberculin test numbered 4,839, as against 4,750 last year. Taking the numbers as a whole throughout the Dominion, the position is very satisfactory, and the careful weeding-out of all clinically affected animals and the application of the test to all those that are deemed suspicious must, to a great extent, place the herds of the Dominion in a more satisfactory position than they otherwise would be. In the Wellington and Otago Districts a decrease in the number condemned has to be recorded—71 in each instance—while in Auckland and Canterbury an increase is shown of 217 and 14 respectively. The Auckland District again shows the highest percentage of condemnations, and this is not to be wondered at when one takes into consideration the conditions under which a number of the herds are kept. This district contains a large area of partially-drained swamp lands on which dairying is the principal asset. Strictly speaking, the areas are unsuitable for this class of farming, in the absence of a better system of drainage. The number of cattle examined at the freezing-works and abattoirs was 381,612, of which 19,476, or 5.10 per cent., an increase of 0.02 over last year, were found to be affected in varying degrees, a considerable number only very slightly. The total number of swine examined was 473,118, an increase of 54,802