

LIVE-STOCK DIVISION.

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

STOCK CONDITIONS GENERALLY.

The season of 1928-29 can be regarded with entire satisfaction by those engaged in the dairy industry. Seasonal conditions were such that there was no lack of food during any part of the season, and catch-crops, grown as a provision against shortage of feed in dry periods, were not required in many cases. These conditions did not give such favourable results in the production of fat lambs. On account of the strong luscious feed which was in evidence on account of the damp season, lambs were very backward in coming to maturity. In many districts the lambs reached the freezing-works later in the season than usual, and of those which did reach the works many were lacking in bloom when seen on the rails. For such produce we would not be justified in looking for the results obtained in previous seasons.

Owing to the mild winter, pastures at time of writing look well and carry a fair amount of feed. Turnip crops are in most districts above the average; hay and ensilage saved has also been above the average. The present position with regard to feed for stock is a very satisfactory one. Unless exceptionally severe conditions are experienced during the remainder of the winter and spring months stock should come through in satisfactory condition.

Speaking generally, pigs have done well, and there has been no serious outbreak of disease calling for special mention. The numbers slaughtered for the season 1928-29 are 516,471, as compared with 498,022 for 1927-28, an increase of 18,449. While the industry is steadily expanding and prices have been fairly satisfactory, I do not feel justified in advising dairy-farmers to make any substantial increase in their output in the present state of the market. If this industry is to further increase we have to look principally to the British market for the consumption of our products; if at any time a shortage occurs, and as a result the market shows an upward tendency, it is not difficult in a short time for producers to meet the demand, and in fact overstep the mark, with the result that there is overproduction and prices fall. This is a frequent occurrence in the history of the industry, and New Zealand producers, on account of being so far from their market, are not able to produce their supplies in time to reap the advantages of any shortage that may occur. Producers in this country should not become unduly optimistic on account of a rising market, as nothing is more detrimental to the industry than to suddenly increase production, and, on account of the unremunerative prices, to get discouraged and more or less cease producing. The aim to be kept in view is a steady increase, not in quantity alone but in quality, which will ensure that there is always a steady demand for our pork and bacon. This can only be accomplished by improved methods of breeding and feeding. At present there are several breeds of pigs in the Dominion any one of which is suitable for the purpose, and which can be improved by proper selection. Regarding feeding and management there is much to be desired. With reference to this the District Superintendent, Auckland, remarks: "The better housing and feeding of swine are subjects which need constant reiteration in order to induce the farmer to pay more attention to these important items of husbandry. In this country we have an abundant cheap source of food—namely, skim-milk—which enables the farmer to produce pork and bacon at a lower cost than many of our competitors. But is the most being made of this by-product? One has only to see how pigs are fed to realize that we are not doing so. If arrangements were made so that this product could be used in a more economical manner, and with the addition of a quantity of grain, so that a better balanced ration is fed, the output could be increased out of all proportion to the cost of the grain supplied. Better housing, bedding, and sanitary conditions are also an absolute necessity." Effective grading is also a matter which requires attention. It is understood that the Meat Producers Board has this matter in hand. The difficulty, however, is to get a grade which will suit all requirements. A fixed standard was drawn up by the Board, but it was found that it did not meet requirements in all cases. The export industry is as yet relatively in its infancy, and there is no doubt that in the near future a standard will be fixed to meet requirements.

At the present time there is a good demand for horses, more particularly of the heavy class for city use. It has been proved that for short journeys and where stoppages are frequent the horse and lorry is a more economical proposition than the motor-lorry. Although prices are high and the supply at present scarcely meets the demand, there is not sufficient indication that the breeding of these animals should be undertaken on an extensive scale. Although there will always be a number of horses required for farm-work, and also for certain classes of work in the cities and towns, I feel satisfied that this branch of farming will never again reach anything like its former proportion, and that the present high price is an indication that fewer horses are being reared, rather than an increased demand for their service. At present the supply is not sufficient to meet the demand, and for those settlers having the facilities for breeding a few good-class draught horses the indications are that there is scope for a limited increase in this direction with profit to themselves.

HEALTH OF STOCK.

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

Horses.

The health of horses generally has been excellent during the past season, and no trouble has been in evidence which calls for special remark. A few cases of strangles and influenza were seen