

for the maintenance of paying prices on the local market. The result was that during the flush season of supply the consumer in many parts of the Dominion was in the happy position of being able to buy eggs below cost of production. It is only a comparatively few years ago that New Zealand had to import large quantities of eggs and egg-material to satisfy the local demand, but, as before indicated, this position has now changed.

During recent years the London market gave promise of the establishment of a sound trade in New Zealand eggs. It is regrettable, however, to have to report that this market slumped badly last season, and as a result the returns did not reach expectations. According to reports received the drop in prices was due to a combination of circumstances. Chief among these was the mild early winter season which prevailed in Britain, and which encouraged greater production than usual at that period of the year. Another factor was the increased number of eggs exported from several European countries which had been practically off the London market since the outbreak of the war. Although the British market declined last season, or, in other words, reverted to something approaching pre-war level, it is gratifying to know that New Zealand eggs commanded higher prices than did those of all other countries which had to ship their supplies from overseas; including Australia and South Africa.

Indications are that difficulties will present themselves relative to the future welfare of the industry, and the greatest question will be whether New Zealand can export eggs to the overseas market at payable prices to the producer. Judging by the prices realized last year, and in view of the present high cost of foodstuffs, the outlook for the industry from this standpoint is by no means encouraging, except for large-sized eggs of undoubted internal quality. Perhaps the most important lesson conveyed by last season's shipments of eggs was the difference in price realized for large-sized eggs as compared with that for smaller grades. Eggs weighing 17 lb. per 120 ("long hundred") gave the best return, whereas the smaller grades showed a decided loss. Reports from London state that our eggs were of good quality, and well graded and packed.

Probably the greatest factor which will govern the position as to whether or not New Zealand will be able to export eggs at remunerative prices in the future is that of food costs, particularly the cost of wheat. Perhaps the biggest difficulty which many producers have had to contend with of late is in being charged top prices for decidedly inferior grains and adulterated food materials.

In accordance with regulations it will be necessary in the future for all eggs imported into Britain to be stamped with the name of the country of origin. What effect this will have on New Zealand eggs remains to be seen.

While there are indications that a future export trade in eggs to the London market is doubtful, it should not be thought that without export the limit of production has been reached. Excepting during the spring and summer months, when production is at its maximum, fresh eggs command a price on the local market which no export returns can approach. If given a better system of marketing throughout the Dominion and a regular supply of fresh guaranteed stamped eggs, there is no telling to what extent the consumptive demand would increase.

Considerable improvement is necessary before it can be said that the local trade is anything like properly catered for. Eggs for export are carefully graded for size and cleanliness, and tested for internal quality under Government supervision. Little, however, is being done in this direction for the local trade. Generally an egg is an egg and nothing more, whether it be good, bad, or indifferent. Obviously this is not the way to secure the confidence of the consumer, nor is it the way to make eggs a more common article of diet. As in the case of any other new industry there are difficulties to overcome, and to succeed in this direction it would appear that the first step would be the enforcement of regulations whereby eggs must be sold according to their size, and stamped as a guarantee of internal quality. If these and other necessary reforms of the local trade were brought about, the industry would be capable of much greater expansion, not so much as a means of livelihood, but as a side-line for the farmer and small settler. The industry is an important one, as the annual value of poultry products—in other words, New Zealand's egg and poultry bill—is estimated at £3,000,000. In considering the development of the local trade, should there be a surplus at any time beyond local requirements the export of this would be necessary for the maintenance of local paying values, even if they did not reach a paying-point. There will, however, be time enough to consider this when the local market has been properly catered for. A bad mistake is the production of too many eggs below the 2 oz. standard, and these are frequently sold at top prices. This, of course, does not tend towards increasing the local consumptive demand; furthermore, such eggs are unsuitable for export. In England, Canada, Denmark, and other countries the enforcement of regulations governing the sale of eggs according to their sizes and internal quality is having a most desirable effect, not only towards increasing the consumptive demand, but in securing enhanced prices, and if the necessary reforms are to be brought about New Zealand must adopt similar measures. Census returns go to show that there are about four million birds in the Dominion held in flocks averaging about two dozen. Obviously under these conditions voluntary reforms on the part of producers would be almost impossible to achieve. Some practical scheme to ensure better-quality eggs reaching the market appears to be imperative.

The Wallaceville Poultry Station, for breeding and experimental work, continues to make satisfactory progress. As a result of careful breeding and selection the stock have now generally attained a desired standard. The demand for birds and eggs for breeding purposes has shown a considerable increase over the previous year. This station is proving to be of real practical value towards widening the knowledge of the instructional staff, which in turn is being passed on to the producer by visits of instruction and through printed matter published by the Department.

With the increased interest that has taken place in poultry-keeping of late the services of the Poultry Instructors have been in great demand. Every effort has been made to cope with the requests coming to hand, but with the limited staff it has been found impossible to do so as fully as I would have liked.

WALLACEVILLE VETERINARY LABORATORY.

The interest taken by the farming community in the work carried on by the staff of this Laboratory is becoming greater each succeeding year. To such an extent has this been in evidence from the veterinary side of the work that an addition to the staff became necessary if they were to keep abreast of the work. During the Director-General's visit to Great Britain last year he made arrangements which resulted in the services of Mr. J. Hill Motion, M.R.C.V.S., B.Sc.(Ag.), B.V.Sc., being secured, and his services should be a considerable help to the staff in the future. Before leaving for New Zealand Mr. Hill Motion visited the principal laboratories related to his work in Great Britain and