

This stability has encouraged a number of additional persons to enter the industry, and whilst these prices remain it can be said that persons suited to this particular kind of animal husbandry can at least make a substantial portion of their living from this source. It is now possible to make financial arrangements to obtain advances on parcels of Angora-rabbit wool sent to England for sale.

Fur Rabbits.—During the year the Minister of Agriculture gave permission to the Federation of Industrial Rabbit-farmers, Christchurch, to import rabbits of the following breeds—namely, Beverns, Havanas, and Rex—and shipments have already been landed. The local rabbit-breeders will now be in a much better position to cater for the requirements of the furriers who want a wider variety of furs than the breeders have been able to supply hitherto.

DEER-SKINS.

The efforts of the Department referred to in last year's report have been successful in obtaining outlets in Australia, which is now New Zealand's best customer for this class of skin. The largest individual buyer is a firm of hide and skin merchants in Australia who became interested through the Department's representations. Renewed inquiries from New Zealand tanners for supplies have been received by the District Officers of the Department, but the demand is overtaking available supplies.

The number of skins exported for the past two years are as under :—

	1930.	1931.
Australia	155	4,892
United Kingdom	105	2
United States of America	6,162	50
Totals	6,422	4,944

PRICE OF MOTOR-SPIRIT.

The Department's investigation into the cost of importing and distributing motor-spirit within New Zealand, referred to in the last annual report of the Department, has been made the subject of a separate report, which was laid on the table of the House on the 6th October, 1931 (Parliamentary Paper H.44c). The report sets out in detail the various costs involved, from the f.o.b. cost to the ultimate prices charged to the consumer in New Zealand. Reference is made to some difficulty in obtaining the information in the exact form required by the Department, but as a check on the information submitted by the various companies of the f.o.b. selling-price in country of production, freight and insurance, &c., information was obtained from the New Zealand Trade Commissioner in Canada, and also from the High Commissioner in London. The present high selling-price of motor-spirit is due in a large measure to the excessive distribution costs in the Dominion. These costs were shown by two companies, whose accounts were kept in a manner which accurately disclosed the information as 8·25d. and 8·8d. respectively.

The retail distributing units in this trade, as in the case of other commodities, are greatly in excess of requirements. This is clearly shown by the fact that there was at the 30th June, 1931, no less than one pump to every twenty-nine motor-vehicles registered in the Dominion.

Attention is drawn to the comments made by the Department as set out on page 12 of the report.

GAS REGULATIONS.

The Board of Trade (Gas) Regulations, which are administered by the Department, provide safeguards in respect to heating-value, purity, pressure, price, and measurement. Nineteen gas undertakings in the Dominion come within the scope of the regulations.

The work of the Gas Examiners and Inspectors of Meters has been carried out efficiently during the period under review, and the official relations with the gas companies and municipal undertakings have been most satisfactory.

COMMERCIAL TRUSTS ACT.

A number of complaints were made to the Department during the past year that the provisions of the Commercial Trusts Act, 1910 (as amended by section 12 of the Cost of Living Act, 1915), were being infringed, and in each case these were followed by full investigation by the Department into the nature and circumstances of the alleged breaches. These complaints related principally to alleged refusals to supply and to the fixation of prices of commodities covered by the schedule to the Act. In only one instance were the facts such as to justify legal action being taken, and it is anticipated that this case will be heard very shortly.