

The following is the report of Mr. C. J. C. Cussen, Chief Poultry Instructor :—

“While it cannot be claimed that a great deal of advancement has been made during the year, it would appear that the industry is gradually settling down to a more solid basis and that the true possibilities and real needs of the industry are becoming better known.

“The production of eggs and table poultry is an important branch of agriculture that warrants encouragement, and the assistance that is being given by the Government to those engaged in the production of these essential and valuable articles of food is fully justified. However, it may be advisable to remind those who may think of taking up the business as a means of livelihood that poultry-keeping on a large scale is a highly specialized business that should not be undertaken without first gaining some practical experience, if possible, on a successful poultry-keeper's plant, that there is a limit to the quantity of eggs that can be profitably marketed in this country, and that the prospects of building up a large profitable egg-export are not encouraging.

“It is not desired to infer that the industry has reached the limit of its profitable expansion in this Dominion, for when it is considered that in Canada since the introduction of a system of egg-grading for local marketing, controlled and supervised by the Government, the average consumption per head of the population has increased from 202 to over 400 eggs per annum, it would appear that there is ample room for improving our industry by a better system of local marketing.

“*Census of Poultry, 1936.*—A census of poultry was associated with the census of population taken for the 24th March, 1936, and the following is the principal result, including fowls, ducks, geese, and turkeys: North Island, 2,316,058; South Island, 1,703,018: total, 4,019,076. The proportion of poultry to population is higher in the South Island than in the North Island by about one-third.

“Movement in the number of poultry over the last three censuses, including Maori flocks, has been :—

Census.	Fowls.	Ducks.	Geese.	Turkeys.	Total.
1921	3,491,567	379,988	46,234	73,220	3,991,009
1926	3,308,384	352,030	43,879	76,825	3,781,145
1936	3,415,793	351,608	61,418	82,896	3,911,715

“The average number of birds per head of population has been as follows, Maori flocks not included: 1921, 3.3; 1926, 2.8; 1936, 2.6. The number of householders maintaining poultry numbered 166,354, an increase of only 242 on the 1926 figure. The size of the average flock is some 23.3 birds. The great majority of flocks are small, 81 per cent. of the total containing less than twenty-five birds. While the figures show a fall in the proportion of poultry-keeping householders to total householders, the returns also show that there were 504 flocks of 500 birds and over, as compared with 214 flocks of 500 birds and over in 1926, which would indicate that a larger number of poultry-keepers are specializing in the business and depending upon their poultry as a means of a good deal of their livelihood.

“*Export.*—During the past season some 11,281 cases—338,430 dozen—eggs were shipped to the United Kingdom, as compared with 11,915 cases—357,450 dozen—shipped the previous season. This shows a decrease of 19,020 dozen over the previous season's export.

“It is regrettable to have to report that owing to the low price of eggs on the London market, and the fact that a number of the eggs shipped from Christchurch reached the market in a poor condition, the export was not a financial success as far as Christchurch and Otago provinces were concerned. Investigations are still being made, but up to the present it is difficult to account for the eggs arriving in poor condition.

“It may be mentioned that though Christchurch is the largest egg-exporting centre in the Dominion the facilities for the grading, packing, and holding of eggs before shipping are inadequate, and the matter of providing better facilities for this work needs serious consideration if the export business is to be successfully continued from Christchurch.

“*Chick-sexing Examinations.*—Examinations were conducted by the Department at Wallaceville and at Christchurch at the end of August. In all, eight students undertook the examination, and two were successful. One qualified for a second-class certificate, and one who held a second-class certificate qualified to have his certificate renewed. If there are sufficient candidates offering the Department is prepared to undertake further examinations at the beginning of this hatching-season.

“*Disease.*—Intestinal coccidiosis caused some heavy losses in various parts of the Dominion during last year, especially in the Wellington, Foxton, and Manawatu districts. In order to protect the industry against the spread of the disease it was found necessary to place restrictions on the sale of stock from four large plants. Extra service was rendered by the instructional staff to owners of these plants, and by a general cleaning-up of the plants, heavy culling of stock, and special care in the selection of breeding birds it is pleasing to be able to report that conditions have so much improved that the restrictions imposed have now been removed from three of the plants concerned.

“Poultry-keepers cannot be too careful to guard against disease, and the best preventive measures to employ are extra care in the selection of breeding-stock, rearing the birds on fresh ground, avoiding overcrowding, and keeping houses as clean and dry as possible.

“*Wallaceville Poultry Station.*—This plant continues to render good service to the industry. The quality of the stock is being maintained, and the introduction of the fresh blood from New South Wales is proving beneficial. The demand for eggs for hatching-purposes, and breeding-birds, by both