

LIVE-STOCK DIVISION.

REPORT OF W. C. BARRY, M.R.C.V.S., DIRECTOR.

Extended activities in almost every direction marked the work of the Live-stock Division during the past year, involving the utmost efforts of officers of every branch who have been called upon to perform the various duties arising in the course of what has been a very busy year. The animal health position of the Dominion, the responsibility for which is carried by this Division, continues to be satisfactory, in so far as the more serious epizootic diseases are concerned, yet the higher incidence of some of the more common diseases of live-stock incidental to the ever-increasing demands of high production and high stock-carrying capacity calls for the most energetic measures possible to adequately cope with the work of investigation and research. During the year the veterinary staff has been strengthened by the addition of nine officers, seven of whom were engaged in Australia. The majority of these officers has been attached to the Department's Veterinary Laboratory at Wallaceville for special field investigational work into sheep and dairy-cow diseases, both in the North and South Islands. Further additions to the staff are necessary, but the great difficulty of securing men with the suitable training to undertake specialized investigational work has hampered the position with regard to efficient staffing. It is expected that some of the students who were granted bursaries by the Government to enable them to study at a Veterinary Teaching Institution overseas will be graduated at the end of the present year, and it is anticipated that some of them will be prepared to take up positions in the Department.

It is pleasing to state that the long-felt want of additional facilities at the Wallaceville Laboratory will shortly be rectified by the completion of the buildings for which plans and specifications have been prepared. These additions will enable the research work at Wallaceville to be extended and carried out under conditions which were previously not possible.

HEALTH OF LIVE-STOCK.

HORSES.

The general health of horses continued to be satisfactory during the year, and absence of serious contagious diseases of the horse, a position to which the Dominion can claim an enviable reputation, has again to be recorded. Some outbreaks of strangles occurred during the year, but the incidence of this disease was not unusually high. Joint-ill of foals continues to give some trouble, more especially in the Clydesdale breeding districts of the South Island. The condition known as "rye-grass staggers" of horses was observed in many districts during the late summer and autumn.

Horse-breeding.—In past years I have drawn attention to the very unsatisfactory position prevailing regarding the breeding of light horses of the remount or general utility type. The breeding of this class of horse had, unfortunately, reached a very low ebb, with the result that a good type of riding-horse was fast disappearing. It is therefore most gratifying to record that the Government has during the year put the Remounts Encouragement Act of 1914 into operation. The Act provides for the payment of a subsidy to owners of stallions, and the scheme will allow owners of mares to obtain the service of stallions, suitable to leave good types of riding-horses, at a very reasonable fee. Much interest has been evinced in the proposal by such organizations as the New Zealand Racing Conference, New Zealand Trotting Conference, hunt and polo associations, the Royal Agricultural Society, agricultural and pastoral associations, &c. (Great credit is due to the New Zealand Racing Conference for the active interest taken in the matter, and for the assistance given in organizing the formation of local remount committees in accordance with the requirements of the regulations under the Act. In this respect thanks are due to the secretary of the New Zealand Racing Conference (Mr. H. R. Sellars) for the untiring interest he has displayed in the promulgation of the scheme. The organization is now under way, and the scheme will be in operation for the next breeding-season. It is to be hoped that owners of mares in districts in which a stallion is subsidized will take advantage of the opportunities offered under the Act to replenish our horses of the hunter and hack class.

With regard to the breeding of draught horses, good prices have been realized for useful farm draught horses in the North Island where the demand is increasing. The breeding of high-class Clydesdale horses continues to be a feature, more especially in the South Island, and high prices are obtained for sound horses of outstanding stamp.

The Dominion has established a high reputation for the breeding of Clydesdale horses, a position which is reflected in the numbers which have been exported to Australia. It is most desirable, therefore, that every encouragement be given to the fostering of this important feature of farm-stock production. In past years comment has been made on the necessity of legislation being introduced with the object of ensuring the soundness of draught stallions used for breeding-purposes. Such legislation is in force in many countries in which draught-horse breeding is an important economic factor. It is to be hoped that the Stallions Bill, a proposed measure which has been suggested for some years back, and which has recently been redrafted, will shortly become law.