

SECTION 2.—NOTIFIABLE DISEASES.

Attached are tables showing the notifications of infectious and other notifiable diseases in the Dominion for the year 1937. Tables A, B, and C and, unless otherwise stated, the comments and tables in this section deal with Europeans only.

GENERAL.

The year under review was marked by a severe epidemic of acute anterior poliomyelitis (infantile paralysis). This epidemic is the subject of a separate report in the appendix. The total notifications of infectious and other notifiable diseases during 1937 were 4,203, including 765 of infantile paralysis, compared with 3,652 in 1936, of which 87 were of infantile paralysis.

Increases occurred in the following infectious diseases, the increase in each case being shown in parentheses: Diphtheria (86), paratyphoid fever (7), poliomyelitis (678), erysipelas (38), puerperal fever (82), indulant fever (11), ophthalmia neonatorum (12).

The most marked decreases were scarlet fever (228), bacillary dysentery (43), typhoid fever (13), and eclampsia (22).

Tables and comments regarding certain of the more common infectious diseases are given below:—

(a) *Scarlet Fever.*

Year.	Number of Notifications.	Deaths.		
		Number.	Rates per 10,000 of Mean Population.	Case-fatality Rate per Cent.
1932	829	6	0·04	0·72
1933	783	4	0·03	0·51
1934	762	8	0·05	1·05
1935	863	8	0·05	0·93
1936	1,152	8	0·05	0·69
1937	924	6	0·04	0·65

During the past six years notifications of scarlet fever have on only one occasion (in 1936) exceeded 1,000. The rising tendency shown in 1935 and 1936 did not continue into 1937.

(b) *Diphtheria.*

Year.	Number of Notifications.	Deaths.		
		Number.	Rates per 10,000 of Mean Population.	Case-fatality Rate per Cent.
1932	802	40	0·27	4·99
1933	963	27	0·18	2·80
1934	436	26	0·18	5·96
1935	747	33	0·22	4·42
1936	513	20	0·13	3·90
1937	599	24	0·16	4·01

The incidence of diphtheria remains low, the notifications during the past six years, as shown above, contrasting markedly with the figures for the last epidemic experienced (5,458 notifications in 1917 and 5,539 in 1918).

Another interesting feature is the remarkably low incidence in the South Island. During the year only 37 of the 599 cases notified occurred in the South Island, and for the six years shown in the table of the total of 4,060 cases, only 365 or 9 per cent., were in that Island. In the southern portion of the South Island, in the provinces of Otago and Southland, no cases were notified during 1937, and only 41 for the past six years. Thus an area containing 14 per cent. of the population of the Dominion contributed only 1 per cent. of the cases of diphtheria. This result is not due to preventive immunization, as no work of that nature has been carried out in that area since 1927, and only a minor amount in the seven years prior to that.

(c) *Poliomyelitis.*

In December, 1936, poliomyelitis became epidemic in the Otago Health District, and 85 cases were notified by the end of that month. During 1937, 765 cases were notified, of which 208, or 27 per cent., were aparytic. The epidemic is the subject of a separate report.