

As a guide to these provisions two circulars were freely distributed by the Department. The first was for the use of the licensed sellers of Third Schedule (" farm ") poisons such as arsenical sheep-dips, orchard sprays, weed-killers, and many farm-animal medicines, and also for storekeepers generally who sell the less potent (" household ") poisonous substances of the Fourth Schedule, as, for example, carbolic disinfectants, caustic soda, strong ammonia solution, arsenical fly-papers, and certain permitted rat and mouse poisons. These must all be properly labelled and packed, while for liquid substances the words of the Act specifying a container " readily identifiable by sight and by touch " have been given a precise meaning. A record of all sales of Third Schedule poisons must be kept by licensees, and approximately eight hundred storekeepers' licenses, three hundred wholesalers' licenses, and thirty storekeepers' extended licenses have been in force for the current year. The second circular explained the provisions affecting medical practitioners, dentists, and veterinary surgeons, while special measures were taken to acquaint pharmacists of their obligations. With few exceptions the retail sale of First and Second Schedule poisons is confined to the chemists, and a record of the sale appropriate to the Schedule must be made.

As a result of the distribution of the circulars and instruction given by Inspectors it may be said that there is now a fair understanding by those most concerned of a set of regulations which cannot help but be somewhat involved. At the outset some misunderstanding existed in regard to Second Schedule poisons packed as proprietary lines, these including official preparations such as vegetable laxative tablets and also patent medicines of undisclosed formula. The regulations require the manufacturer to state the percentage of any poison on the labels in such cases, this leaving no doubt as to whether or not any particular preparation is a poison.

An important feature of the regulations is the classification of certain drugs as poisons which, in addition to being handled only by pharmacists, may only be dispensed to the public on the prescription of a medical practitioner, dentist, or veterinary surgeon. These " prescription poisons " include barbituric acid and its various derivatives (*e.g.*, veronal), amidopyrine, sulphonal, and that type of substance commonly known as " chlorodyne " which contains between 0.2 per cent. and 0.1 per cent. of morphine. The form in which prescriptions are to be issued and their dispensing are specially prescribed in a manner similar to that required for those narcotic drugs (*e.g.*, opium, cocaine, morphine) controlled by the Dangerous Drugs Act, 1927. Prior to the advent of the Poisons Act, 1934, and the present regulations there had been no legal restraint on the sale of the class of drugs now covered, and this legislation should do much to prevent cases of their misuse arising.

In the administration of the Act up to the present leniency has been shown to all classes of distributors of poison in meeting difficulties found in individual cases. While it is realized that a number of adjustments to the regulations may be necessary, it is now proposed to institute a more thorough system of inspection and strict enforcement of the law is to be expected.

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