

“General Activities of Field Officers.—The services of field officers have been made use of in two specific directions, as previously indicated—viz., pedigree-sow recording and census collection. These services are definitely of an instructional and advisory nature, as distinct from a regulatory one, and tend to emphasize the importance of management and the prevention rather than the treatment of stock ailments, an aspect of departmental policy that has repeatedly been stressed and one that calls for the full support and confidence of the community in order to make it effective. A marked increase in requests for advice on housing, feeding, and general management has been noted during the current year.

“Housing of Pigs.—It is in this section that the most active interest has been shown. Mr. Peirson reports from every district in the North Island a striking increase in the number of improved houses and lay-outs. This is true for the South Island also.

“Under Mr Peirson’s direction, a bulletin of plans and specifications for all the most satisfactory types of houses and lay-outs has been prepared and is now in the hands of the printer.

“Feed-supply.—As a result of the acute shortage of feed in July–August, 1938, and the consequent representations made to this Department for assistance in ensuring adequate supplies for the forthcoming season, the Internal Marketing Department has undertaken the importation of barley in quantity sufficient to meet the demand. This is available at main ports (North Island) to individuals or merchants, in ten-sack lots or more, at prices lower than pig-feed has been for a number of years. On a conservative basis, this importation should effect an increase in production equivalent to at least thirty thousand baconer carcasses. Immediate attention to the production of weaners in order to make use of this increased grain-supply is essential if appropriate returns are to be obtained from it.

“Publications.—During the year a bulletin entitled ‘Modern Methods of Pig-production’ was issued and distributed through dairy companies at cost. This method of distribution was adopted to meet the unexpected demand for the bulletin and to finance the production of a second edition of approximately one and a half times the number of the original issue. As previously mentioned, a further bulletin on houses and lay-outs is in course of publication and will be distributed as soon as possible.”

DAIRY INSPECTION.

This aspect of the Division’s work has been given special attention during the year. The importance of the supervision of the public milk-supply does not need to be stressed. It is a phase of the field officer’s duty which calls for continuous effort and a large amount of instructional service. It is, however, pleasing to record a general upward trend in the hygiene of dairies supplying milk for local consumption, this being more particularly noted in the case of the suppliers to the larger centres.

Owing to seasonal conditions, difficulty was experienced in many centres in maintaining the required quantities of milk, and arrangements to meet the position were necessary in several instances.

LIVE-STOCK STATISTICS.

The 1938 sheep returns (as at the 30th April) showed that sheep flocks in the Dominion had increased by 1,072,966 to a total of 32,378,774, an increase of over one million for the third year in succession. The number of breeding-ewes has increased by 325,575. The number of sheepowners has increased by 732 to 31,909. The number of cattle in the Dominion as at the 31st January, 1938, increased by 116,981 to a total of 4,506,082. The number of dairy cows (included in cattle totals) decreased by 62,727 to 1,872,797. The number of pigs in the Dominion was 756,466, a decrease of 45,953 on the previous year. Horses show an increase of 368, the 1938 total being 278,167.

MEAT INSPECTION AND SLAUGHTER OF STOCK.

The work of the meat-inspection staff was satisfactorily performed throughout the year. Owing to the establishment of a “Supervising Meat Inspector” at all freezing-works, numerous changes in staff location took place. This was further designed with a view of strengthening the staff at certain works at which heavy pig slaughterings are carried out, and to bring about the greatest degree of efficiency in the inspection of export meat and meat products. Reports from London on condemnations of meat indicated the number to be few when a comparison is made with the large quantities exported.

The total numbers of stock slaughtered at registered premises were: Sheep, 4,153,927; lambs, 9,910,782; cattle, 588,772; calves, 1,013,968; swine, 1,012,836.

The following table shows the stock slaughtered during the past year at freezing-works only, the previous year’s figures being shown for comparison:—

Stock.	Year ended 31st March, 1939.	Year ended 31st March, 1938.	Increase.	Decrease.
Cattle	331,135	322,992	8,143	..
Calves	932,333	996,436	..	64,103
Sheep	3,291,919	2,534,236	757,683	..
Lambs	9,780,736	9,839,269	..	58,533
Swine	805,006	883,080	..	78,074