

Cheese which was withheld from shipment during the autumn has been the cause of some criticism in the London reports on account of mould penetration, and, while a certain amount of this is inevitable when cheese is held over long periods in cold store, it cannot be lightly regarded, as it is not only a source of monetary loss to the seller, but is also the cause of a loss of good will, which is perhaps an even more serious matter.

In all cases the reports received have been sent on to the dairy companies concerned, and steps have been taken to draw their attention to the necessity for improvements in the conditions obtaining in the curing-rooms. As a result, more attention is being given to this matter, and in a number of Southland factories installations of air-circulating plants have been installed, while artificial cooling has been provided at one more curing-room in the Wellington Province, and a second is to be provided in one at present in the course of erection.

The attention of employees has also been drawn to the necessity for the more careful handling of cheese in the factories, and in those instances where cracked rinds have been in evidence on receipt of the cheese at the grading-stores the defective ones have been returned to the owners.

The position in connection with the waxing of cheese remains practically stationary, as the quantity so treated during 1937–38 was 59.43 per cent. while in 1938–39 it was 59.63 per cent.

New kinds of wax for which certain advantages have been claimed are at present under trial, and shipments of cheese coated with them have been sent to London, but no reports have so far been received.

HOURS OF LABOUR.

The effect of the reduced hours for cheese-factory employees has, largely owing to the short season, not yet been fully felt, as at the time of writing quite a number of factories have closed down or are on the point of doing so. During the closing months of last season there was an inclination for some companies to try to make the cheese within the hours stipulated in the award, but a better understanding of the provisions of the award has shown that many of the anticipated difficulties can be overcome, and less has been heard of in the way of complaint regarding them.

CASEIN.

As already stated, there was a considerable change over from butter and casein to cheesemaking during the past year, and preparations are at present in hand for further changes in the same direction for next season. This is due to the difficulty of making sales at a remunerative price, and neither the gradings nor the export figures give a true indication of the quantity made.

Gradings in the past have been almost wholly confined to Wanganui, but the business carried on there for many years past has now ceased operations. The quantity graded for the year was only 189 tons, as compared with 983 tons for 1938 and 1,326 tons for 1937. Customs returns give the quantities exported during the last three years as 1,626 tons, 3,203 tons, and 4,185 tons. Values were £71,651, £215,133, and £218,433.

REGRADEING OF BUTTER AND CHEESE AFTER STORAGE.

The practice of regrading selected samples of butter and cheese with a view to checking their keeping-qualities and the accuracy of the original grading has been continued at Auckland and New Plymouth. At Auckland 187 boxes of butter and 82 crates of cheese, and at New Plymouth 30 boxes of butter, were so examined. These examinations have shown that the points awarded at the first examination have in most cases been maintained, but where any defect has developed advantage is taken of the presence of the managers concerned to draw attention to these. Unfortunately, a number of dairy companies have decided to discontinue these storage trials, a decision which may be an indication that under the present system of marketing their interest in their product ceases after it is graded.

COOL-STORE TEMPERATURES.

Owing to the cool temperatures prevailing there has been little difficulty experienced with the transport of butter and cheese from the place of manufacture to the cool stores. As the result of examinations of butter from the outside of the block and from the inside of the same block there is some evidence that this is a point which may require to be given closer attention in the future.

Daily readings of holding temperatures of all rooms in use at grading-stores continue to be taken, and these seldom give room for complaint. This is not always so in regard to temperatures reported by the Inspectors of the Marketing Department, which are taken at the ship's side. It would appear that there is at times a considerable lag between the time of despatch at the stores and loading on to the ship, and there is room for considerable improvement at this point.

In addition to temperatures, the records of humidity in the cheese-stores are regularly taken, and it is hoped by this means to gather information which will indicate the best method of reducing mould growth.

GRADING OF MILK AND CREAM.

As already stated, the cool weather has had a marked influence on the quality of the milk received at cheese-factories, and to a lesser extent of the cream received at creameries. This, and the falling away in quality in some areas during the dry months, gives strong support to the requirement that all supplying dairies should be provided with an ample supply of water at a suitable temperature for cooling-purposes.

Constant supervision over the grading is exercised by officers of the Division, but it would probably be correct to say that there is more difficulty in maintaining the correct standard at creameries than at cheese-factories. This is probably accounted for by the fact that, while the cream-grader depends entirely on the senses, the milk-grader has before him each day a sample of curd which shows the kind of cheese which each supplier's milk if manufactured separately would make.