

LIVE-STOCK DIVISION.

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

The work of the Live-stock Division during the year under review has been of a particularly onerous nature, owing to the very severe and extensive outbreak of so-called "facial eczema" in sheep and cattle in several parts of the North Island in the Months of March, April, and May, 1938. This severe outbreak of disease caused a transfer of field officers necessitating the concentration of an advisory service in the more severely affected areas, so that all possible assistance might be given to farmers to enable them to cope with the disease. At the best, a very heavy mortality ensued, particularly in the Waikato district, where dairy herds and sheep flocks were acutely affected. The matter required particular attention in the freezing works, as well as in the field, so that special care was necessary to safeguard the quality of meat being exported at the time of the disease.

To deal adequately with an investigation into the disease a special research organization was set up in the Waikato. This investigation is being prosecuted by a team of workers, with the co-operation of farmers' representatives, under the chairmanship of Dr. Filmer.

During the year five additions to the veterinary staff were made possible through the return of graduates who had been studying abroad under the system of veterinary bursaries now in operation. Although this addition of staff has improved the position, there is still a need for further veterinary assistance to deal with the routine of field-work and meat-inspection, as well as meet the needs of veterinary research into animal-health problems in the Dominion.

The operation of the Remounts Encouragement Act during the past year and the coming into force of the Stallions Act, 1939, will make further demands on the field veterinary staff. However, it is hoped that the operation of these two Acts will do much to foster horse-breeding and fill what was considered to be a much needed want in this class of live-stock production.

The additional accommodation being provided at the Wallaceville Laboratory is very necessary for the added staff at this centre. During the greater part of the year the Officer in Charge, Wallaceville, has been overseas on a visit of inspection and inquiry into veterinary research work in other countries.

HEALTH OF LIVE-STOCK.

HORSES.

The health of horses has remained in a very satisfactory position, no serious disease or losses of an epidemic nature having been recorded during the year. An occasional outbreak of strangles was recorded, and the incidence of joint-ill in foals appears to be below other years. A few deaths were reported, and attributed to the effects of ragwort poisoning.

Owing to the dry spell of weather during February and March cases of horses being affected with "staggers" were fairly common in several districts. No deaths are recorded.

Horse-breeding.—It is reported that a decline in heavy-horse breeding is evident in several districts. The use of tractors has been more general on several farms, and it appears as if the younger men on farms to-day are more suited to mechanical power than to dealing with teams of horses. On the other hand, the scarcity of labour on the farm and the necessity of having the work carried out expeditiously may be the main cause of the decline in breeding. No doubt much work is now carried out by contract, and this may account for some of the increase in mechanical traction.

During the year the Stallions Act was passed and will be in operation during the next breeding season. This measure has been introduced with a view to ensuring the soundness of draught stallions used for breeding-purposes. In time the Act should do much to improve the breeding of sound stock, which in its turn should encourage an increase in breeding generally, both for home supply and for export to Australia.

In regard to the breeding of light horses, the Remounts Encouragement Act of 1914 was made operative during the year. This act provides for the payment of a subsidy to owners of selected and approved stallions in the various districts. Owners of approved mares are enabled to avail of the use of the subsidized stallions at reasonable fees as a result of the subsidy. Much organization work was carried out through the active interest taken in the Act by the New Zealand Racing Conference, and special thanks are due to the Secretary (Mr. H. R. Sellers) for his interest and assistance in carrying out the work during its first year of operation. The Act has had the support of the New Zealand Trotting Conference and other kindred live-stock bodies, and in its first year of operation a very satisfactory position eventuated. Altogether a total of thirty-two stallions were subsidized. In some districts difficulty was experienced in obtaining a suitable stallion, and in five districts two stallions were selected to cover the area involved. Three stallions were rejected under the Act on account of unsoundness.

In addition to those already mentioned, thanks are due to the members of the District Remount Committees, who supervised the operation of the scheme in their districts. The scheme may be said to be well initiated and should result in a crop of foals of a suitable type. The scheme should also encourage more interest in horse-breeding on rational lines and should in the course of a few years eliminate nondescript breeding.

It is hoped that the two Acts referred to will revive horse-breeding and stimulate an interest in the horse among the young people of the country. There appears to be a decline in the entries of horses at many of the agricultural and pastoral shows, and this decline may be arrested by such a stimulus.