

“Massey Agricultural College substantially increased its poultry department with the £5,000 granted to the college for this purpose, and Lincoln College established a new plant with a grant of £6,000. Both colleges are now in a position to assist increased production of eggs and stock.

“While some increase in production generally appears probable, there are no indications that any such increase will meet the present heavy demands for eggs and poultry.

“Considerable interest in poultry-farming is being displayed by returned servicemen, and this may ultimately assist the position, when such men have received a training.”

WOOL

Instructional work in connection with wool was interrupted during the year owing to the secondment of the Wool Supervisor to another Department on defence duties. On resumption of duty with this Department at the end of 1943 the Wool Supervisor was engaged in some work for the Marketing Department. In addition to routine work, classes in wool-classing were conducted twice weekly for the Army Education Welfare Service.

RABBIT NUISANCE

The rabbit position as a whole can be viewed as reasonably satisfactory. There are, however, indications of not only increased numbers in some districts, but of their having spread to districts not previously rabbit-infested. Every endeavour has been made to keep the pest in check by making all obtainable agents available and giving assistance for summer work when required. The subsidy paid during the summer and autumn months by the Rabbit-skins Committee, combined with the high winter price of skins, has also contributed largely to increased numbers being killed, but these influences, while valuable under present wartime conditions, are only sporadic and cannot be viewed as offering any solution of the rabbit problem.

The supply of strychnine, while augmented during the year, is still far below requirements, but fortunately additional rabbit-traps were obtained and phosphorus has been in sufficient supply.

Rabbit Boards constituted now number 94, 11 new Boards (9 in the South Island and 2 in the North Island) having been formed during the year.

Control of the rabbit pest through Rabbit Boards is steadily gaining in popularity, and the success of this method of control as demonstrated by older-established Boards cannot be controverted.

NOXIOUS WEEDS

The man-power position and the lack of the more effective and suitable weed-destroying agents have again restricted the noxious-weed-eradication measures, but an attempt has been made with the weedicides available to maintain the control gained in previous years when sodium chlorate and atlaicide were available.

It is satisfactory to note that attempts to obtain some sodium chlorate have now been successful and, while the importations will not approach the quantity that could be used, it will allow of valuable work being again carried out, particularly on dairy-farm properties.

County Councils carrying out a scheme of eradication of noxious weeds, particularly ragwort, were again provided with financial assistance, and much good work was carried out having consideration to the man-power position and the available agent.

ANIMAL RESEARCH DIVISION

REPORT OF J. F. FILMER, DIRECTOR

With the growing realization that New Zealand must play a big part in providing food for the Armed Forces during the war, and that post-war demands will be even greater, animal research is becoming increasingly important. Although a number of the staff are still on active service, every effort is being made to assist in increasing the efficiency of animal-production in New Zealand. In some of the larger projects the stage has now been reached where the results of preliminary research can be tested in the field. If the results already obtained in artificial insemination and vaccination against contagious abortion can be repeated on a large scale they will afford excellent illustrations of the value of the contribution which animal research can make to the national economy of New Zealand.

DIAGNOSTIC SECTION, WALLACEVILLE

During the year reports have been issued on over 7,000 specimens submitted by officers of the Live-stock Division from diseased animals and poultry. Sixty-seven thousand doses of blackleg vaccine and 40,000 doses of scabby-mouth vaccine have been prepared and issued.

RESEARCH WORK

Facial Eczema.—Very few cases of clinical facial eczema occurred this year, but the very dry summer and warm rain which fell in February and early March, 1944, resulted in some liver damage in the Waikato districts. Pasture collected from affected areas during the autumn of 1943, when dried and later fed to lambs at Wallaceville, produced typical facial-eczema liver changes, thus confirming the theory that the disease is primarily due to a toxin which forms in pasture under special climatic conditions. The knowledge that drying does not destroy the liver toxin should enable more rapid progress to be made in its chemical identification. The field experiments conducted at Wairoa have shown that