

LIVE-STOCK DIVISION

REPORT OF W. C. BARRY, DIRECTOR

A favourable autumn and winter season during 1945 resulted in an excellent lambing season with a very high percentage throughout the country. Losses of ewes from seasonal diseases were confined mainly to those areas where feed was scarce owing to prevailing dry conditions. These dry conditions were noted in Hawke's Bay and Poverty Bay, where losses from pregnancy disease of ewes were seen. In almost all other districts the seasonal conditions were favourable. A severe flood was experienced on the Taieri Plain in May, where root crops and pasture were rendered unsuitable for stock.

Although the winter was favourable for stock, the spring was cold and wet in many districts and the usual spring growth was retarded. In early summer dry conditions prevailed in the greater part of the Auckland Province and in Poverty Bay and Hawke's Bay. The dry weather persisted over so many months that a serious drought resulted, with lowered production from dairy herds, and a serious feed position arose. Any hay saved was required for herd maintenance in the affected areas, the outlook for the coming winter being serious. Although hay has been obtained from the South Island, a favourable autumn season is very necessary to provide some supplementary pasture. Dairy stock are in low condition for the coming winter and the possibility of spring losses is a very real one.

Associated with the drought conditions there were extensive forest and peat fires, and many areas were dried out to such an extent that pasture was in some instances destroyed. Fortunately, serious stock losses did not occur, but it was necessary to slaughter many light-weight lambs in some districts owing to the scarcity of pastures and absence of fattening crops. Although many districts experienced difficulty in watering their stock owing to streams and creeks drying up, the dipping of sheep was well carried out and the stock remain in clean, healthy condition. It is only natural under such dry conditions that a distinct fall in the production of dairy-produce must be expected.

HEALTH OF LIVE-STOCK

HORSES

The health of horses has remained good during the year and no serious outbreaks of disease have been recorded. Some cases of strangles occur from time to time, and during the drought period a number of horses were affected with grass staggers. Very little breeding of farm horses is taking place, in fact, the number of horses on farms is gradually declining. The breeding of thoroughbred horses is being actively pursued.

CATTLE

Diseases scheduled under the Stock Act

Tuberculosis.—The number of cattle condemned under the Stock Act for tuberculosis during the year amounted to 5,640, 4,922 being condemned on clinical symptoms and 718 as reactors to the tuberculin test. In each case compensation was paid in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The tuberculin test was applied to 14,656 cattle, of which 718 reacted, giving a percentage of 4.9.

The total number of cattle, exclusive of calves, examined at the various abattoirs and meat-export slaughterhouses was 674,948, an increase of 134,818 on last year's figures. Of these, 42,542, or 6.3 per cent., were found to be affected with tuberculosis in varying degree, a large percentage being only slightly affected. This indicates a reduction of 0.5 per cent. infection among cattle slaughtered in these premises.

The testing of herds is carried out on a voluntary basis, and it will be noted that 12,142 cattle were tested at the owners' request. In addition, 2,546 head of stock were tested at the various Government farms under the control of several Departments.

Included in the Statutes Amendment Act passed last session is provision for the testing of dairy herds, more particularly in the first instance those herds supplying milk for town-supply purposes. It is expected that a number of the herds supplying unpasteurized milk will be dealt with in the coming year in all milk-supply areas.