

was reduced to little more than two-thirds of the average over a number of years. The outcome has been a total production of wheat hardly greater than that yielded by the previous year's lesser acreage. The requirements of the Dominion are, however, covered—a matter for genuine satisfaction in these times of general economic disturbance. It is much to be regretted that wheat-growers as a whole were neither favoured by yield nor market, and on broad national grounds the hope is expressed that the area devoted to this vital crop may not be materially reduced for next season in consequence. Commendable enterprise appears to have been shown in the chief cereal districts during the past autumn as regards winter-wheat sowing, and if this is followed up by reasonably liberal spring sowings the position should be fairly well assured. Taking the Dominion as a whole the production of annual field crops, apart from wheat, last season was fairly satisfactory, and does not call for special comment.

In regard to field cropping in the Dominion generally, there would appear to be some need for greater adaptability in methods of cultivation. Varying climatic conditions require to be anticipated and provided against to a greater extent. In districts where droughty seasons have proved to be not uncommon a modified form of "dry farming" would probably be sound practice, profitable both to the farmer and country.

While animal-products, such as meat, dairy-produce, and wool, remain the chief agricultural staples of New Zealand, the factor of pastures must always be one of supreme importance. With the exception of the dry districts previously named, the past season's grass crop was good and grazing operations favoured. Although the Dominion as a whole has a well-deserved fame pastorally, there can be no doubt that the larger part of the grass pasture, especially so-called permanent pasture, is capable of very great improvement. This is a subject which is now receiving particular attention from the Department, and valuable results may be expected in due course from these investigations. There is also great necessity for widespread establishment of more or less permanent forage crops that will thrive in dry weather and stand judicious grazing. Lucerne, well managed, undoubtedly fills these latter requirements. It is already successfully grown on a fairly large scale in several districts, and plot tests in every part of the country have put the crop past the experimental stage. The time appears to be ripe for a general forward movement in lucerne-cultivation, and there are indications that such a movement is steadily gathering way. These remarks are largely prompted by consideration of the hard experience last season of hundreds, if not thousands, of farmers in the dry districts and of the great loss of wealth which might have been avoided by more adaptive grazing practice.

The health of the live-stock as a whole was good throughout the year. Constant vigilance is needed, however, to maintain the high reputation of the Dominion in regard to freedom from animal-disease. Judging by the year's data more active steps are necessary in order to get tuberculosis in cattle and pigs fully under control. With the co-operation of stockowners in adopting preventive measures there is no reason why the comparatively small incidence of this disease in New Zealand should not be reduced to vanishing-point. Some troublesome outbreaks of blackleg among young cattle in certain parts of the South Auckland district have been met by quarantining and inoculation measures similar to those which have been so successful in controlling this disease in Taranaki. Several other animal troubles of lesser import have been overcome or are under investigation by the veterinary officers.

The year's wool-clip was satisfactory in general as regards both quality and quantity, while further advances were recorded in prices. Wool thus easily maintained its position in point of value at the top of the list of New Zealand exports. Combining with wool the value of the mutton and lamb output, together with skins and sundries, the supremacy of the sheep in New Zealand agricultural production is more outstanding than ever.

A further marked expansion of the frozen-meat industry took place during the year, several new works having been completed and others commenced. A large increase in the cold-storage accommodation of existing works was also effected. These developments have enabled the growing output of the industry to be handled with comparative ease. A serious block in shipments, owing to insufficiency of refrigerated tonnage, attained its greatest height during the latter part of the 1914-15 meat season, but accumulated stocks were completely cleared before the new season's trade began in any volume. Large accumulations have again taken place at the works this season, but no anxiety is now felt in regard to the situation. The output of frozen meat, mainly owing to the large increase in beef, has constituted a fresh record, and the trade has proceeded steadily under the Imperial purchase scheme.

A serious aspect of the meat industry lies in the continued over-slaughtering of young stock—females in particular. Data recently collected show conclusively that this practice is on the increase as regards cattle, while the 1915 sheep returns disclosed a heavy decrease in breeding-ewes. The keen demand and very high prices ruling for freezing-stock are, of course, mainly