

The splendid displays made by the Department at a number of agricultural and pastoral associations' shows have met with even more appreciation than in previous years, but there are some who express doubt as to whether the considerable cost of these displays is warranted. To these I would point out that in many countries such associations are largely subsidized by the Governments, while nothing of the kind is done in New Zealand, and that, although undoubtedly a number of people merely regard our displays from the sightseers' point of view, a very great number of farmers study them carefully and derive direct benefit from them; in addition an enormous amount of indirect good is done by setting the farmers thinking and planning to improve their farms. These displays also act as centres at which settlers may, and do, meet our instructional officers and make arrangements for subsequent visits. Personally I am convinced that the displays should be continued to a reasonable extent.

I should like to take the opportunity of thanking those officers who, without any pressure from the Department and purely with a desire to help the agricultural industries, devote a lot of time—largely their own spare time—to the work of contributing to the *Journal of Agriculture*. Their work is of the highest importance in promoting good farming, and to my knowledge is intensely appreciated by thousands of readers of the *Journal*.

That a large measure of successful achievement has resulted from the year's operations of the Department is evident from the appended brief summary of the reports of the officers (in so far as those documents come within the scope of this present report).

The Dominion's enviable and probably unique position in regard to freedom from serious diseases of live-stock has been fully maintained, the surest proof of the good work of the officers concerned. The percentage of tuberculosis in cattle and pigs has not shown this year the progressive decrease recorded in recent years, but the percentage is nevertheless very low in comparison with other countries. The investigation of the obscure disease known as bush sickness has reached a stage where the prospects of controlling the trouble by practicable means are distinctly good.

The question of whether the very heavy slaughtering induced by war prices have made too great inroads upon breeding-stock needs careful consideration, and in this connection the pastoral statistics now being compiled are somewhat anxiously awaited.

The inspection of live-stock, of small slaughterhouses, and of dairies supplying household milk has been effectively maintained notwithstanding the difficulties arising out of the war. The prevention of the introduction of disease by imported live-stock, &c., has been continued by means of the port inspection and quarantine services. In this connection new regulations have been made and are working smoothly. The control of the sterilization of animal-manures for shipment to New Zealand has been in operation in Australia and India as usual. The examination of meat at public abattoirs and meat-export slaughterhouses has also been rigorously maintained, and every carcass unfit for human consumption has been diverted to the manure-works. The number of meat-export slaughterhouses is increasing rapidly. A great deal of extra work has fallen on the meat-inspection staff and the officers controlling them in connection with the supply of meat to the Imperial Government for war and other purposes. This work has been done both well and cheerfully.

The poultry industry has had to contend against the high prices of grain during the year, but has weathered the storm successfully, and will probably be all the better for the heavy culling of birds that was inevitable. There is plenty of room for the expansion of poultry-keeping amongst farmers, but in most cases it is advisable that more advantage should be taken of the aid of the Poultry Instructors to ensure working on profitable lines. The effect of the distribution of eggs and breeding-stock at cheap rates from the Department's poultry-stations at Ruakura and Milton is now very evident in the better class of laying-hens now being kept throughout the Dominion, but an improvement in the preparation of table poultry for market is a consummation devoutly to be wished. The three Poultry Instructors have had a very busy year giving lectures, demonstrations, and written and verbal advice to present and prospective poultry-keepers.

During the year a considerable development took place in the work of advising settlers in regard to the farming of arable land, and it is recorded that as a result of such advice, given during the year or previously, a distinct advance in that class of farming is observable in many parts of the Dominion. In this instructional work the Divisional Director has been assisted by the Agriculturist, the Fields Instructors and Fields Inspectors, and the Managers and staffs of the experimental farms at Ruakura, Mounahaki, and Weraroa. Good service in the same direction has also been done by the departmental displays at certain agricultural and pastoral shows.

At Ruakura the usual work with field-crops, dairy herd, sheep, pigs, poultry, and bees was carried on with much success, notable features being the raising of red-clover and mangel seeds; fine crops of wheat, rye, Scotch tares, and rape; and good sales of Darbalara milking Shorthorn bulls, Southdown rams, and Berkshire pigs. At Mounahaki also the ordinary operations were undertaken with favourable results, points calling for special notice being the success of the Ayrshire herd, the Ryeland and Border Leicester flocks, and Berkshire pigs; the fine crops of mangels, lucerne, potatoes, carrots, and tomatoes; and the plant-breeding work. At Weraroa the chief matters for comment are the continued success of the Holstein and milking Shorthorn herds, and the initiation of an important scheme of experiments with fodder crops and grasses. At the new Ashburton agricultural station preparatory work is in progress.

A large number of field-crop experiments have been carried out by farmers or schools in conjunction with the Department, and much interest in farming problems has been aroused thereby.

Work has been carried on in connection with the farming of certain special areas of intractable land, such as the North Auckland gum areas, the pumice lands of the Taupo Plateau, the manuka area between the Eyre and Waimakariri Rivers, the pakihi lands of the Westland District, the Mackenzie and Otago Central plains, and the mossbanks of the Owaka district. A start has been made with work having for its object the reclamation of drifting sands.

The registration of the brands and analyses of fertilizers has been continued, and occasional samples have been taken to ensure that vendors maintain the registered standards.