

APPENDIX:

LIVE-STOCK DIVISION.

REPORT OF C. J. REAKES, D.V.Sc., M.R.C.V.S., DIRECTOR.

Wellington, 29th May, 1916.

The Secretary of Agriculture, Industries, and Commerce.

I FORWARD herewith my report of the work carried out by this Division during the past official year.

C. J. REAKES, Director.

INTRODUCTION.

The work of this Division during the past year has been to some extent influenced by war conditions, and, while carrying on every branch of activity without interruption and with due efficiency, new developments in the form of increased work directed towards the further improvement of the productiveness, quality, and general health conditions of the Dominion live-stock have necessarily had to be postponed. Many capable officers are absent on active service, and a considerable proportion of those remaining here have had to devote more or less of their time to work directly associated with the operations of the Defence Department—a duty carried out with keenness and a full realization of the fact that the necessity for each doing his best in assisting towards bringing the war to a successful and honourable conclusion is the paramount consideration at the present time.

LIVE-STOCK.

No unusual disease conditions of a serious nature have come under notice, and the Dominion still maintains its position as a country remarkably free from serious communicable forms of disease. Severe drought conditions prevailed during the spring and summer months in Canterbury and North Otago, and to a less extent in parts of the North Island, pastoral operations suffering considerably in consequence. Elsewhere than in these drought-affected districts the good feeding-conditions, combined with high values for food-animals and their products, have rendered the season an excellent one for stockowners. Horses are the only class of farm animal which have not appreciated in value, and, in spite of large Government purchases for the Army, the horses bought last were purchased for no higher prices than those ruling at the beginning of the war.

BREEDING-STOCK.

Market conditions have had the effect of increasing the number of stock slaughtered for export, this applying particularly to cattle, and it is evident that the question of maintaining a sufficiency of beef-breeding stock in the Dominion requires consideration. Unfortunately, no yearly enumeration of cattle takes place, as is the case with sheep, and the last census having been made in 1911 the figures then obtained are of little or no value as a guide to the formation of a reliable opinion as to the present position. Statistical information regarding the number of cattle in the Dominion is now being collected, but it is not likely to be ready for some little time. The following figures, showing the number of cattle, exclusive of calves, slaughtered for export during the last three years, are, however, worthy of note:—

Year ending 31st March—	Bullocks and Heifers.	Cows.	Bulls.	Total.
1914	63,378	36,364	9,937	109,679
1915	112,414	58,247	11,459	182,120
1916	104,497	94,314	12,520	211,331

The largely increased slaughtering of cows is very noticeable; and, further, it has been observed that, apart from fat heifers, a number of young unfinished cattle, many of them heifers, have been slaughtered. If this apparently excessive slaughter of female stock continues and prevails to as great an extent, it spells trouble in the immediate future in the shape of at any rate a temporary shortage of breeding-cattle and a reduced output of beef at a time when, so far as present indications can be taken as a guide, beef values are likely to still be on a good basis.