

It is somewhat surprising that more poultry and eggs are not produced in New Zealand. The climate and general conditions are most suitable for the successful rearing of poultry stock. To conduct the business as a sole means of livelihood demands capital, experience, enthusiasm, skill, and a special aptitude which few individuals possess. Where the chief expansion of the industry must be looked for is on the small farm, when conducted as a side line. Already the great proportion of the poultry products of the Dominion comes from the farms, but unfortunately, in too many cases poultry are not looked upon from a business view-point. Poultry-farming in New Zealand is capable of great expansion, and the furtherance of this is the chief object of the work being carried out by the Department. The supply of high-tested stock at a moderate price with the distinct object of encouraging their adoption by farmers and small holders, coupled with the work of poultry instruction, is having a marked effect in bringing about a decided improvement in the class of poultry kept in the country, as well as making the business more profitable to those engaged in it.

One very noticeable weakness in the industry is the wretched manner in which the market for table-poultry is catered for. Much remains to be done before the supply is equal to the demand. Good-conditioned cockerels fetch exceptionally high values, yet the bulk of the poultry that reach the market may be classed as inferior stores. The chief requirement in this respect is the want of proper feeding. With a view to placing this branch of the industry on a better footing, and to demonstrate to the producer the great waste that is taking place by sending unprimed stock to the market, the Department has now fattening-tests in hand. The results will be published in the Department's *Journal* in due course.

During the year the services of the Poultry Instructors have been in keen demand from all parts of the Dominion. Lectures have been delivered, and demonstrations have been conducted on private farms. The greatest number of requests have, however, been for assistance in culling stock. The present work being done by the Instructors must have a telling effect in the near future.

Owing to the abnormal conditions prevailing the Milton Poultry-station shows a slight decrease in the number of eggs and birds sold for breeding purposes during the year. In anticipation of declining values of foodstuffs and a heavy demand for breeding-stock during the coming breeding-season an increased number of stock were reared during the year. Thus farmers and others who have been compelled to dispose of their poultry are given an opportunity of making a fresh start with high-quality stock at a moderate cost.

#### SHEEP-DIPPING.

On the whole it may be said that farmers have exhibited a greater appreciation of the practical advantages gained by properly complying with the sheep-dipping clauses of the Stock Act. It is matter for regret that prosecutions for exposing lice-infested sheep in saleyards have still had to be undertaken, but I am glad to state that they have been fewer than in late years. There should be no necessity for these prosecutions, as sheepowners, whether farmers or dealers, should recognize that it is altogether to their own interest to carry out the dipping provisions of the Stock Act efficiently and properly. The sheep-louse and sheep-tick are responsible for the annual loss of a great deal of monetary value to the Dominion, and, while the gradual improvement in methods is satisfactory, it is to be hoped that the time is not far distant when sheepowners will in their own interests systematically settle down to the work of coping effectually with these parasites, and so obviate the necessity for the Department having to prosecute in order to safeguard sensible sheepowners.

#### WOOL.

The close of the 1914-15 wool season was marked by an extremely high level of values, especially in regard to crossbred wool. During the winter months the usual sales of crutchings were held, and the demand from Japan sent prices up to hitherto-unknown values in the trade. Prior to the opening of the wool season 14d. to 15d. was being paid for the better class of crutchings free from seed. The export of crossbred wool being then permitted to the United States of America, competition of American buyers was felt at the earlier sales of November and December. Extreme prices were paid for the best half-bred and Romney wools, half-bred reaching 21½d., crossbred and Romney wool selling up to 19¾d. At the November sales in Wellington a few lots of choice Southdown wool were bought for Japan at the record prices of 23d. to 24½d. per pound in the grease. Exports to America ceased during January, but the market had so hardened for all descriptions of wool that although American competition was withdrawn from the sales values for ordinary coarse and medium crossbred were considerably above the earlier sale prices, while the wools most in favour with the American buyers maintained their value.

The trade was brought to a halt in the latter end of January, owing to the shortage of ocean freight space, and sales were delayed considerably in consequence, but were renewed under altered conditions—viz., buyers to delay payment until shipping documents were available. The Wellington sale of 14th February constituted a record for the Dominion, totalling 39,000 bales. In the latter part of February to March prices declined to the extent of 1d. to 1½d. per pound for crossbred wool, finer sorts falling about 1d. per pound. Of late, however, values have shown a tendency to harden. There still remains a considerable quantity of wool to dispose of, and some 17,000 bales are set down for the 2nd June sale at Wellington, by which time it is expected that sufficient shipping-space will be in sight.

The condition of the North Island wools was good, being sound and well grown. On the average they were probably rather heavier in grease than last season. Many of the South Island