

During the 1918 session of Parliament legislation affecting live-stock interests was passed by amendments to the Slaughtering and Inspection Act and the Rabbit Nuisance Act. The former measure was amended to give the Dominion Government a strong protective control of our meat industry and trade through a more thorough system of licensing of exporters and meat-works. The other amending Act strengthened the Department's hands for enforcing the destruction of rabbits, and extended the facilities for the formation of local Rabbit Boards among settlers.

Mr. A. R. Young, M.R.C.V.S., was appointed Director of the Live-stock Division in September, 1918, and is carrying out his responsible duties with energy and thoroughness.

The Dairy Industry.

It is now widely recognized that a weak spot in our dairy industry lies in connection with the raw material—the faulty condition of some of the milk and cream received at the factories. The limited inspection practicable with the available staff of Dairy Instructors has been sufficient to reveal the necessity for further improvement as regards the premises, appliances, and practice of many of the milk-suppliers. A great extension of inspection and educative work in this direction, involving a considerable increase of Instructors, is required, and it is necessary to take early action in the matter. A movement bearing directly on this matter lies in the practice of cream-grading at the factories. In part of the Auckland District this system has lately become established, with promising results, and is being extended and improved by experience. The Dairy Division is giving strong support to the movement, and rightly advocating greater differences in price as between the higher and lower grades of cream.

Another system which seems likely to spread among the dairy companies is that of having the testing of the suppliers' milk and cream carried out by officers of official status. The dairy companies and the Department co-operate in the selection of suitable men, who become members of the staff of the Dairy Division, the principal part of the expenditure on salaries being borne by the companies, and the balance, together with travelling-expenses, by the Department. This system has much to commend it, and its extension is hoped for and will be supported.

The developments in the dairy industry as regards dried-milk and other milk-products apart from butter and cheese are being studied by the Department with a view to the general guidance of producers. For the purpose of acquiring first-hand up-to-date information on the subject a member of the Dairy Division, Mr. W. Dempster, is now carrying out investigations in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. With this information available it is hoped to do still better in giving a sound and reliable lead on these matters.

The grading of export butter and cheese has continued with its usual smoothness, as evidenced by the fact that during the year written protests against the graders' decisions were received in only two cases; moreover, on investigation, these particular gradings were fully substantiated. A matter about which a warning seems necessary is that of the water-content of butter. The average of all the samples of butter taken at the grading-stores for this purpose was just over 15 per cent., and there appears to be a tendency to go closer to the safety margin than is conducive to the best interests of the butter industry.

Soils and Fertilizers.

With the easing of staff difficulties due to war conditions, the soil survey of the Dominion has been resumed in charge of the Chemist, and steady progress is anticipated from now on. The system followed will enable very comprehensive data to be recorded, and most valuable practical benefit cannot fail to result in due course.

The Department's campaign in connection with the use of lime has been continued, and accompanied by the opening-up of several fresh sources of limestone by private enterprise. In analyses of soils carried out at the Chemical Laboratory the "lime-requirement" as determined by the Hutchinson-MacLennan method is now included. New point has been given to the liming movement by stressing the economy of phosphates (for some time past in short supply) which could be effected by a judicious use of lime. An interesting investigation on the action of lime in making available reverted phosphates (from previously applied fertilizers) lying dormant in the soil, or checking such reversion, is being put in train by the Chemist at the experimental farms.

Under the reorganization of the Department the work of registration of fertilizers under the Fertilizers Act has been allotted to the Chemistry Section. Steps are being taken to extend the taking of samples and improve sampling methods. The whole of this activity, including analysis, will therefore be consolidated.