

BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY.

The beekeeping industry is still making satisfactory progress. Notwithstanding that the past season has been a very erratic one for the beekeeper, a good average honey crop has been gathered in the different districts. Although prices have dropped on the Home market, the returns obtained are still very satisfactory, and should remain so for some time to come.

The Apiary Instructors have been kept busy during the year on inspection-work, honey-grading, demonstrations, &c. Very satisfactory work continues to be done by the majority of the honorary apiary inspectors, and their services, which are voluntary, are much appreciated. The appointment of two Apiary Inspectors, one at Christchurch and the other at Dunedin, has been of great assistance to the Apiary Instructor in charge (Mr. E. A. Earp), who has the whole of the South Island to supervise.

Experiments.

Experimental work has been continued at the Ruakura Apiary in co-operation with the beekeeper in charge, Mr. A. B. Trythall. The experiments include tests with different makes of hives; quantity of wax that can be produced by a colony worked for that purpose only; testing different makes of cappings-melters. In connection with the wax-production experiment three large hives were used. These each produced on an average 2½ lb. wax. The tests will be tried another season away from the main apiary, and it is anticipated better results will be obtained.

Queen-rearing Apiary, Tauranga.

Good progress is being made with the establishment of the queen-rearing apiary at the Tauranga Horticultural Station. A beekeeper in charge was appointed in October last, and since then the apiary has made rapid headway, there being now about 140 colonies with seventy-seven purely mated queens. These queens have been mainly raised from two Italian queen-bees kindly donated by Mr. W. Lenz, the well-known apiarist of Masterton. In order to expedite the work a number of queens were obtained from the Ruakura Apiary, and these have since been replaced. An Australian-bred queen has also been procured to encourage the production of large numbers of drones. The queens thus raised should provide the basis of a good strain of bees. At the end of the year a total of 202 queens had been raised, 84 being pure, 31 mismated, and 87 untested. A supply should be available for distribution next spring.

Registration of Apiaries.

The number of persons who have registered to date is 5,503, representing a total of 59,427 hives.

Full publicity has been given as to the requirements of the regulations, but notwithstanding this there are still a number of persons who have failed to register, and it is evident more drastic steps will require to be taken in the matter.

Export of Honey.

According to the Customs figures 6,619 cwt. of honey, valued at £32,018, was exported during the year. This represents a big increase both in quantity and value as compared with the previous year. This is no doubt due to the large accumulations of honey held up in the grading-stores for want of shipping-space being got away during the year, and to the high prices ruling at Home. The following figures show the quantities of honey exported from the Dominion during the last five years ending 31st March: 1915, 2,456 cwt., value £4,763; 1916, 2,390 cwt., value £6,067; 1917, 1,572 cwt., value £3,554; 1918, 2,819 cwt., value £7,991; 1919, 6,619 cwt., value £32,018.

The Apiary Instructors, who have been kept very busy with the grading of honey, report that, generally speaking, the bulk of the lines were in good condition; a few, however, had to be rejected on account of bad packing, leaky tins, and fermentation.

STAFF.

The carrying-out of the work of the Division during the year has again been handicapped through the absence of permanent officers on active service. Now that the war is over it is hoped, with the return of those still absent, that matters will soon return to a more normal condition. I have much pleasure in reporting that all officers, both temporary and permanent, have under the unsettled conditions carried out their duties satisfactorily.