

## SHEEP-DIPPING.

The practices of exposing for sale sheep affected with lice and failing to dip according to the provisions of the Stock Act are still, unfortunately, far too prevalent, and in the interests of the Dominion as a whole this should not be. A number of prosecutions have again had to be instituted for these offences, and heavier penalties will have to be asked for if lice-affected sheep are to be reduced to a minimum. Lice—and ticks too, for that matter—can be kept off sheep. A practical instance of this came before the Department during the year, when a trial of a certain sheep-dip was to be carried out on one of the quarantine stations where a few flock ewes were depastured. To carry out the test sheep affected with ticks had to be introduced from outside, as the ewes were perfectly clean.

## MAMAKU FARM (BUSH-SICK AREA).

During the past year good progress has been made at this farm. More land has been acquired, and an early start will be made in the production of suitable crops to enable systematic dairying to be commenced. New sheds are to be erected, and a large area is to be stumped and put under the plough. Financially the farm has been a success, and now with a permanent supply of water assured it is confidently expected that it will continue self-supporting, and that any experiments necessary for the investigation of bush sickness will be covered by the income produced. There are no new developments to report, but a number of observations have been noted which will prove of great value when dairying operations are commenced.

## POULTRY.

The high prices that have ruled for poultry-food during the past year, and the inability on the part of many poultry-keepers to secure a sufficient supply of wheat for their birds, have not had a tendency towards the industry regaining its pre-war condition. So acute has been the position that none but the highest type of bird would pay to keep. This has necessarily meant a serious reduction of stock, and consequently a great shortage of fresh eggs. The demand for this article of diet has been far from satisfied, with the result that higher prices have been paid for guaranteed fresh eggs than ever before in the Dominion. Poultrymen who thoroughly understand their business and who severely culled their flocks, retaining only birds of heavy egg-capacity, and who were in a position to secure ample food, report making more money out of their poultry than ever before. Particularly does this apply to those who were in a position to grow their own food—namely, the small settlers on the land. It is from this source that the supply of eggs and table poultry must chiefly come. The great drawback to the industry at the present time is that too many poultry-keepers are solely dependent on the farmer for growing the necessary food-requirements, and whether the industry advances or not largely depends on how far the farmer is prepared to do this. In this connection history has repeated and will again repeat itself—that is to say, when foodstuffs—particularly wheat—are cheap and plentiful, eggs will also be in a similar position, and *vice versa*. Small settlement, whereby the poultry-keeper can grow his own fowl-food, and particularly where the business is conducted as a side-line, appears to be the only prospect of the industry being developed and multiplying in importance.

*Milton Poultry-station.*—The policy of the Department in supplying purebred poultry and settings of eggs from tested stock at moderate rates from this station has been continued during the past year. The demand was so great, especially from the farming community, that many orders had to be refused and the money returned. None but the best specimens of the breeds have been bred from, and the progeny have had a gratifying effect in raising the standard quality of many poultry flocks of the Dominion. While much good work has been done in this direction, the equipment does not serve as a means of demonstrating the best methods of housing, &c., that should be adopted on a modern plant. The buildings are absolutely out of date, and in many cases are fast getting in a decayed condition. Further, the general layout of the plant is in these more enlightened days anything but what it should be, making it most costly to work. In view of this, and taking into account the unsuitability of the soil for poultry, together with the severe climatic conditions usually experienced at Milton, I am of the opinion that it should be closed, and that a new up-to-date plant should be established in its place in another locality. If this were done the policy of supplying eggs and stock for breeding purposes could be continued, but in addition the plant would serve a dual purpose by demonstrating the right methods of keeping poultry for profit-making. With the present place it is most unsatisfactory, especially seeing that so many returned soldiers have gone and are contemplating going to Milton for the purpose of being given a thorough training in all branches of poultry-work. The stock on the plant is of excellent quality, but it requires constant oversight to maintain the standard under the existing conditions.

*Feeding-tests.*—During the year two feeding-tests were carried out at the Milton Station—the one to ascertain the cost of rearing pullets to an age of six months, and the other to find out what result in egg-yield could be secured by the elimination of meat or its substitutes from the ration. The results of these tests are being published in the Department's *Journal*.

*Poultry Instructors.*—Though there are now four Poultry Instructors, it is found impossible to comply with all the many requests for their services to deliver lectures and to visit plants for the purpose of giving practical advice on the spot. The question of increasing the staff of Instructors is a matter for urgent consideration.

*Utility-poultry Standards.*—In order to place the judging of utility-poultry on a sound and uniform basis the publication of a New Zealand Utility-poultry Standard, with drawings of the various breeds dealt with, was undertaken by the Department, with the valuable assistance of delegates appointed by the different poultry organizations. It is satisfactory to state that the book is now an accomplished fact, and reflects credit on all who gave their assistance to its preparation. The most difficult part of the work lay in the drawings, involving an immense amount of patient working-out of detail on the part of Mr. F. C. Brown, Chief Poultry Instructor, and Mr. C. Cussen, who rendered valuable assistance. Great credit is also due to Mr. G. Nordstrum, of the Government Printing Office, for the manner in which he completed the drawings for the respective plates.