

steamers owing to the seamen's strike, materially lessened the quantity of fertilizer exported to the Dominion, but despite these obstacles 4,195 tons of manure were sent from the various licensed mills.

Regarding the work at the mills, I have at all times found the regulation steam-pressure well maintained for the full time demanded—in many cases longer. Generally speaking, the licensed premises have been kept in a satisfactory condition with reference to buildings, appliances, and surroundings. At two of the mills, however, I deemed it necessary to delay renewing the license until some urgent repairs and alterations, previously promised, are actually carried out. At one of these establishments very extensive additions are in course of construction, but will not be completed for another eight or nine months. Through lack of proper accommodation owing to this disorganization the manure, after sterilization, on several occasions of late has been allowed to come into contact with raw animal material of a dangerous nature. In consequence of this a large proportion of the output had to be rejected for shipment. A new manure-factory is provided for in the additional buildings. If, however, the company wish to continue preparing manure for New Zealand in the old premises in the meantime, it is essential that they observe the requirements of the regulations.

Last September a manufacturer in Tasmania notified me, through his Sydney representative, that he wished his works licensed as early as possible. The application form supplied was never completed nor returned to me, and inquiries since made lead me to much doubt the existence of any sterilizing-appliances in these works. Previous to the application for a license a shipment of 100 tons of fertilizer was sent from here to Auckland, the composition of which was superphosphate 84 per cent. and bonedust 16 per cent. Several inquiries reached me from mercantile brokers in Brisbane regarding the licensing of a number of meat-works; in each instance the manure had already been manufactured—in one case it was on a steamer *en route* from Messrs. Vestey's works, Darwin.

The quantity of raw material received at the mills has shown an increase on last year, doubtless owing to a more plentiful supply of cattle and sheep at the Flemington saleyards. None of the meat-canning factories in the vicinity of Sydney are now in operation; these in the past greatly augmented the supply of raw material at several of the licensed mills. Much of the supply of dry country bones now coming forward, upon which several of the mills are principally dependent, is from the remains of stock that perished owing to the drought conditions of the first half of last year, and to the unusually heavy flood rains which followed.

According to a summary compiled from the annual returns furnished by the Stock Inspectors of the various Pastures Protection Boards of New South Wales, there was an estimated decrease of 3,500,000 sheep and 80,780 horses at the commencement of the present year. Cattle, on the other hand, showed an increase of 2,830. The estimated totals for this State at the end of the year were—horses, 496,403; cattle, 2,854,877; and sheep, 29,901,701.

The manufacturers and speculators here took full advantage of the shortness of supplies and the demand from the Dominion in fixing their selling-price. All the old contracts have now been executed, and I am informed that much difficulty is being experienced in entering into new ones on anything like the former terms. Vendors recognize that future business will have to be done on a lower basis of profit.

I have pleasure in recording that throughout the year my assistant, Mr. Joseph Pearson, carried out his duties in a most satisfactory manner, and I also wish to acknowledge the invariable courtesy and assistance received from the Chief Inspector of Stock, Mr. S. T. D. Symonds, M.R.C.V.S., and his officers.

SHEEP-DIPPING.

Prosecutions for exposing lice-infected sheep for sale are still far too common, and indicate that insufficient care is taken in mixing the dip and in dipping the sheep. It would almost appear that the object in view when instituting the dipping of sheep had been lost sight of altogether, and that dipping was simply a necessary matter of form with no desired object. In my report for 1919 I issued a warning to sheepowners that I looked upon this offence as a serious one, and intended to approve of prosecutions against offenders. I desire to repeat this warning.

POULTRY.

Notwithstanding the extremely short food-supply for poultry during the past year, the industry has held its own better than the most sanguine could have expected. In the early part of the year, owing to the difficulty of securing foodstuffs and the price charged for them, the business of poultry-keeping looked to be almost threatened with disaster. The action of the Government at this time in allocating a large line of wheat for poultry undoubtedly served as a means of avoiding a most serious situation. With this wheat available, and by resorting to oat feeding as far as possible, the poultry-keepers were enabled to tide over the most critical time ever experienced with this industry in the Dominion. While foodstuffs have ruled at a high level of value, eggs have also maintained war-time prices. The latter is probably due not so much to decreased production as to an increased consumption. The better quality of eggs now marketed has undoubtedly created a much keener demand.

The Poultry Instructors have had an exceptionally busy time during the year, chiefly in regard to delivering lectures, giving demonstrations on culling and the selection of breeding-stock, answering correspondence, preparing literature, visiting plants, and giving advice on all branches of the industry. In addition, the work of establishing soldiers' training-farms, and giving special attention to returned soldiers who have started poultry-keeping on their own account, has added considerable extra work to the small staff of Instructors. So great has been the demand for their services that it has been found impossible for all requests to be acceded to. Pressure of work in other directions made it imperative that the judging at shows, as previously undertaken, be discontinued.

The demand for settings of eggs and birds for breeding purposes from the Milton Poultry Station has been well maintained. The sales were: Settings of eggs, 1,175; birds, 715. The stock at this farm is of a very high standard both from a breed and a utility viewpoint, but the buildings, fences, &c., (as referred to in my last annual report) are fast going from bad to worse. In short, the plant is out-of-date, and does not constitute an object-lesson to visitors as to what a poultry plant should be. I am firmly of the opinion that it should be either mended or ended at once.

A poultry section at the Avonhead Training-farm of the Repatriation Department was authorized by that Department for the purpose of teaching discharged returned soldiers the business of poultry-keeping. The work of planning the plant, and controlling it, together with the training of the men, is solely in the hands of the Poultry Instructors of the Department of Agriculture. This plant is undoubtedly one of the most, if not the most, up-to-date of the poultry establishments in the Dominion. The number of soldiers desiring training on it is more than can be coped with.

A most notable occurrence during the year was the restriction placed on the importation of egg-pulp, liquid yolks, and desiccated whites. This appears to be a step in the right direction, as it