

also satisfactory to report that last season's lambing was estimated to produce 11,498,456 lambs, being an increase of 602,935 over that of the previous year. In connection with the decrease in the total sheep, it should not be overlooked that although we are slaughtering less adult sheep we are producing and freezing lambs for export greatly in excess of previous years, and this to a very considerable degree accounts for the decreased total, showing that the general tendency is to develop fat-lamb production, for which the Dominion is so eminently fitted. (Since the close of the official year the 1924 sheep returns have recorded a further increase of over 500,000 head in the Dominion's flocks.)

Cattle.—A further increase in the number of dairy cows and heifers, and also in the numbers of other cattle, as compared with the previous year, is revealed in the statistics collected in January, 1923. The numbers of the respective classes are as follows: Bulls, 60,154; dairy cows, 1,248,643; other cattle, 2,171,897; total, 3,480,694.

Swine.—A further increase has taken place in the numbers of swine as at January, 1923, the figures recorded—400,889 head—being the highest yet on record.

Horses.—Although the enumeration of horses as taken in January, 1923, again show a decrease, it is much less marked than formerly, and might indicate that we have about reached the lowest point. The 1923 figures show a total of 330,818 head.

SLAUGHTER OF STOCK FOR EXPORT.

The season again opened with prospects bright for the sheep-farmer, and these conditions have continued. Lambs commanded a high price right from the opening of the works, and on the prices offering on the London market the price paid to farmers by buyers at this end must be considered as being very good. As will be seen from the table following, an increase has taken place in regard to all classes of stock slaughtered at freezing-works during the year compared with the previous year's figures.

				31st March, 1924.	31st March, 1923.	Increase.
Cattle	..	..	..	184,848	155,881	28,967
Sheep	..	..	..	1,932,259	1,927,317	4,942
Lambs	..	..	..	5,118,981	4,410,895	708,086
Calves	..	..	..	18,776	7,504	11,272
Swine	..	..	..	113,200	86,351	26,849

For comparative purposes the following table is given, showing the killings of sheep and lambs for three periods, October to March, in each year, as indicative of the slaughterings from the beginning of each season to the 31st March:—

		1st October to 31st March.		
		1921-22.	1922-23.	1923-24.
Sheep	.. .. .	2,091,840	1,244,490	1,462,128
Lambs	.. .. .	3,011,695	3,128,415	3,492,004

These figures, as will be noted, indicate an increase in the number of lambs slaughtered compared with each of the two previous periods; and, while an increase in the number of sheep slaughtered compared with the previous 1922-23 period is shown, the decrease on those slaughtered during the 1921-22 period is well marked.

INSPECTION OF MEAT.

The inspection of all carcasses of animals slaughtered at meat-export works, abattoirs, and bacon-factories was carried out satisfactorily during the year. The following are the numbers of each class of stock slaughtered under direct inspection during the year ended 31st March, 1924: Cattle, 328,809; calves, 53,151; sheep, 2,502,609; lambs, 5,203,527; swine, 242,918. With the exception of sheep, which show a slight decrease, increases in all the other classes of stock have taken place. It is noticeable that a very substantial increased consumption of beef has taken place within the Dominion, and this accounts for a decreased consumption of both mutton and lamb. The following table indicates the respective class of premises at which these animals were slaughtered, those slaughtered at abattoirs being almost wholly for local consumption, except perhaps in the case of swine, and those slaughtered at meat-export slaughterhouses being intended principally for export:—

				Abattoirs.	Meat-export Slaughterhouses.	Bacon- factories.
Cattle	..	..	..	143,961	184,848	..
Calves	..	..	..	35,375	18,776	..
Sheep	..	..	..	570,350	1,932,259	..
Lambs	..	..	..	84,546	5,118,981	..
Swine	..	..	..	99,635	113,200	30,083

At ordinary slaughterhouses the stock slaughtered was as follows: Cattle, 82,225; calves, 2,372; sheep, 271,434; lambs, 23,323; swine, 23,466. In addition 41,685 carcasses of pork killed and dressed by farmers and sent in to butchers' shops were examined by departmental officers. In connection with the animals shown in the table as slaughtered at meat-export slaughterhouses, the following numbers of the respective classes are returned as consumed locally: Cattle, 34,821; calves, 5,389; sheep, 135,295; lambs, 62,479; swine, 18,022.

COMPENSATION PAID FOR STOCK CONDEMNED.

Compensation to the amount of £12,918 was paid out during the year for £5,363 animals condemned in the field for disease under the Stock Act, and £13,266 for carcasses or parts of carcasses condemned for disease on examination at time of slaughter at abattoirs and meat-export slaughterhouses, &c.,