

The work attaching to the Laboratory farm has been carried out satisfactorily during the year, and the manurial top-dressing tests for mutton-production have been continued during the year under the supervision of Mr. B. C. Aston, Chemist.

#### POULTRY INDUSTRY.

The following is the report of the Chief Poultry Instructor (Mr. F. C. Brown) for the year under review:—

The common view in regard to poultry-keeping is changing. It is now being considered an industry capable of being a considerable wealth-creating medium to the Dominion. While it has been proved that poultry-keeping is capable of providing an independent means of livelihood, the old reservations still exist. Capital is essential, but even more so is experience and the desired temperament. Unfortunately, poultry-keeping, more than any other industry of the soil, suffers greatly from the opinion in which it is regarded as an industry by many people, who, thinking it can be conducted as a sole means of livelihood without any previous knowledge, rush into it without capital, experience, or the other essentials to success. The knowledge is now available of how to manage poultry profitably on a large scale, but to apply this knowledge it is essential that it be first tested in practice, and it is certainly suicidal to do this otherwise than in a small way. Already the great bulk of the eggs and birds in the Dominion are produced as a side line on the small farms where land is comparatively cheap and the conditions are present for its economical working. It is from these places that the chief production must be expected to come in the future.

**Export of eggs:** During recent years small consignments of eggs were sent to London and elsewhere chiefly as a means of ascertaining whether these could be landed in a satisfactory condition on the overseas markets. In a general way the experiments proved satisfactory. Last year, however, an endeavour was made to test the London market on a commercial scale. In all three shipments were made, comprising 106,214 dozen eggs in shell, valued at £6,895, together with 5,450 lb. of egg-pulp, valued at £429. While the price for the eggs shipped in shell was a payable one, it is to be regretted that the price received for the pulp proved unpayable, and reports go to show that the prospect of establishing an export trade in pulp is very remote. The landing on the London market of these three shipments in good order and condition, and the favourable reception accorded them, has made the year under review the most eventful one in the history of the industry. The improved position of the industry is one for congratulation—indeed, its future success appears to be more promising than ever before. The local consuming public are now well supplied with eggs, and at a most moderate price, except for a short time in early winter, while it is gratifying to know that we have the prospect of a good market for unloading any future summer surplus of eggs.

There being yet no legislation to enforce compulsory Government grading of eggs for export, an arrangement was made between the Department and the New Zealand Poultry Association whereby the grading, testing, packing, &c. was supervised by the Poultry Instructors and a Government certificate given them accordingly. Whilst the eggs exported were of good quality, it is to be regretted that owing to lack of knowledge or carelessness on the part of producers, by far too many eggs had to be gone through to secure the desired quality at the trading depots. Owing to being undersized, or in a dirty, stale condition, it was not uncommon to have to reject from 50 per cent. upwards of the eggs coming forward. If producers can be induced to send their eggs to the grading-depots in a proper manner it is quite possible that the overhead charges can be considerably reduced during the coming export season. With a view of improving matters in this connection the Poultry Instructors (whose work in grading was largely responsible for the quality of eggs exported last year) are continuing their efforts in this direction by delivering lectures and giving demonstrations in various parts of the Dominion, as a means of teaching the producer how to properly grade his eggs for the export trade. In addition, the Department has arranged to again distribute to producers this year (through the New Zealand Poultry Association) a quantity of bulletins, setting forth in a clear manner the class of eggs desired for export and those that are not.

The following extract from a report of a buyer, dated the 13th December, 1923, gives some indication as to the fine impression that last season's shipments of New Zealand eggs created on the London market: "As an instance of how the eggs were received on this market it may be said that no sooner had they been cleared than buyers wanted further quantities, and in many cases they were asking as to when further shipments would be coming forward. There is no doubt that if the standard of grading and packing are maintained, good prices can be realized here for these eggs."

With a view to protecting our future export trade I would strongly recommend that legislation be brought down at the earliest possible moment enforcing compulsory Government grading of all eggs that leave the Dominion. As it is there is nothing to prevent egg-dealers and others during the coming season exporting ungraded eggs and injuring the good name which New Zealand now possesses for its eggs.

**Poultry-stations:** As the Avonhead Poultry Station situated at Christchurch, originally established for the Repatriation Department, was not suitable for fulfilling the objects of breeding and distributing tested stock of various breeds of poultry throughout the country, and also unsuitable for the conduct of research and experimental work, it was closed down during the year. The one remaining poultry plant now operated by the Department is that run in connection with the Ruakura Farm of Instruction.

#### WOOL.

The wool-clip for the 1923-24 season was a good one. The wool, being clean, gave a high yield, and considerable improvement was shown as regards classing, &c. The local sales opened with satisfactory prices on a rising market, and several Dominion records were established. The highest prices obtained were 33½d. for half-bred, 33½d. for Merino, and 32½d. for Corriedale. The average price realized for the Dominion was 16d. per pound, as against 10½d. for the previous year. The quantity of wool sold locally was a record for the Dominion, the sum realized being estimated at £11,200,000, which sum becoming almost immediately available to growers is a consideration, and demonstrates the financial benefit accruing to the Dominion through the enhanced offerings at local sales which has developed during the past two seasons. The quantity of wool exported for the twelve months was 259,668,642 lb., of a declared value of £15,265,264, as against £11,955,567 for the previous twelve months.

The Wool Instructor, Mr. J. G. Cook, has been kept fully occupied in giving lectures and demonstrations throughout the Dominion, and the demands upon his time for these purposes indicate that this instructional work is well appreciated.

#### SWINE.

The year has shown a further increase in the swine industry, and the increased interest being manifested indicates a more satisfactory position as likely to result in the near future. The Instructor in Swine Husbandry attached to the Division, Mr. K. W. Gorringe, has given instruction by way of