

## REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL.

THE HON. THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

Wellington, 15th June, 1926.

I beg to submit the following report upon the Department's operations during the year:—

## INTRODUCTORY.

A definite expansion of the work has taken place, this being almost entirely in the direction of increasing the instructional services. The staff dealing with these services has been strengthened by the appointment of seven Assistant Instructors in Agriculture, together with additional Veterinarians, Farm Dairy Instructors, and others.

It is a satisfactory feature of the present day that, apart from the officers specifically entrusted with instruction duties, many whose work lies in the carrying-out of inspection are becoming increasingly useful to farmers in an advisory capacity, thereby assisting in the general policy of advising and assisting farmers in working their farms and handling their live-stock to the best advantage.

The detailed reports of the Divisional Directors and the Chemist are appended. These set out the varied and comprehensive activities of the Department, the work done, and the progress made.

The unfavourable weather conditions which prevailed during the spring months had a marked effect upon the condition of live-stock, particularly dairy cows, and this was reflected in a decreased yield of milk, and a consequent decrease in the quantity of dairy-produce available for export. It is fully realized that one of the pressing necessities of the Dominion, if it is to continue to progress in prosperity and to hold and strengthen its position generally, is the bringing-about of an increase in the production of marketable produce from the land. The experience of the past season affords an excellent object-lesson to farmers—especially dairy-farmers—in many districts in the necessity for providing supplies of food, supplementary to their pastures, for enabling them to carry their stock over a period of pasture-food shortage such as was experienced. Certainly it was one of the most unfavourable seasons experienced for several years, but such seasons are liable to recur.

Another point in connection with dairy-farming claims attention—namely, the use of good bulls, with good butterfat records behind them, in the ordinary milking-herds. The well-termed "scrub" bull is still too much in evidence. It is realized that many dairy-farmers rear none of the calves produced on their farms, and therefore consider that any sort of a bull which will get their cows in calf is sufficient for their purpose, but notwithstanding this the use of these inferior bulls can only be regarded as being bad in principle. Given a good bull the heifer calves of the best-milking cows can be saved for later drafting into the milking-herd, instead of vacancies having to be filled by outside purchases.

Herd-testing has fallen off slightly as regards the number of cows under test. This is not considered due to any loss of interest in testing, but is probably the result of the unfavourable conditions in the early part of the milking season, and the consequent falling-off in milk-yield causing individual farmers to drop testing for the year.

## ANIMAL HUSBANDRY.

As regards animal-disease, the Dominion has maintained its relative freedom from serious diseases, and it is satisfactory to note a reduction, even though it be only a slight one, in the percentage of cattle and pigs found to be tubercular. Blackleg now causes little trouble, and the recommendation of the Director of the Live-stock Division that compulsory inoculation of all calves in Taranaki should cease, and any cases arising be dealt with as localized outbreaks, is well worthy of consideration.

The ticks found on cattle and other animals in the northern part of the Dominion have continued to be harmless so far as any ill effect upon the health of animals is concerned. A systematic series of experiments which, after several failures to get them started owing to the ticks supplied dying, have been carried out at the Queensland Government's laboratory, at Townsville, indicate that these ticks—unlike the so-called "Queensland tick"—are incapable of transmitting tick-fever from animal to animal. As these ticks progress southwards in the Dominion they seem to find it increasingly difficult to establish themselves, especially when away from the coastal areas, and a number of farms where they at one time appeared in small numbers are now quite clear of them. They damage hides when present in sufficient number, and this point needs special attention and in itself warrants farmers doing all that is possible to eradicate them.