

DAIRY DIVISION.

REPORT OF W. M. SINGLETON, DIRECTOR.

THE SEASON.

Not for many years, fortunately, has such an unfavourable dairying season been experienced throughout the Dominion as that of 1925-26. The winter, although comparatively mild in most dairying districts, was followed by a cold, bleak spring, and there was very little growth of grass until late October. Dry weather prevailed during summer and autumn in a number of districts, notably North Auckland, Wairarapa, Hawke's Bay, and Marlborough, and with the exception of Otago and Southland there has not been that "flush" of pastures to ensure a maximum production of butterfat.

Hay crops generally have been poor, and although the provision of green crops is being given some attention much more could be done towards providing sufficient winter food to ensure dairy cows entering on their lactation period in good condition.

PRODUCTION.

The high-record production of the preceding year has not been maintained during the year under review. Unfavourable weather conditions, together with some reversion to sheep-grazing, have been the influencing factors in this direction. Many dairy-farmers, however, are assuredly recognizing the necessity of increasing the productive capacity of their farms by giving more attention to the top-dressing of their pastures with artificial fertilizers, together with the breeding of a higher-producing type of dairy cow.

QUALITY OF BUTTER.

It is pleasing to state that the quality of butter this season has been well maintained, and that a fairly large number of dairy companies have evidenced considerable improvement. This improvement has been particularly noticeable with companies which have appointed a farm dairy instructor and have adopted cream-grading and payment according to grade. Improvement has also been influenced by the increase of the minimum points for first-grade butter from 88 to 90 points.

Probably during no season has more attention been given to the neutralization of the acidity in cream for buttermaking. Less neutralizing agent has been used, and fewer complaints have been received from the United Kingdom in reference to that objectionable flavour described as "preservative." The body and texture of butter continues to be uniform, and moisture is evenly incorporated. As a means to improving the quality of our butters the Dairy Produce Control Board is offering prizes to dairy companies which have made the most improvement in their average grade for this season over that of the previous year.

Although the quality of butter has evidenced improvement in New Zealand it would appear that the prestige of our butter has not been enhanced in the United Kingdom. It is known that too much of our butter is held for protracted periods by owners who await a higher range of prices. Such butter loses its "freshness," and in other cases it develops a "staleness" which is not appreciated. We have various reports on butters manufactured about a year prior to inspection in the United Kingdom. A system which will reduce these delays in our butter getting to the consumer is very much to be desired.

FOREIGN TIMBER FOR BUTTER-BOXES AND CHEESE-CRATES.

During the year a number of dairy companies used foreign timber as cheese-crates. For this requirement it has proved comparatively suitable. Cheese is not so susceptible to taint as is butter, and no complaint was forthcoming in this connection.

Some complaints have been received from the United Kingdom regarding wood-taint in butter on the outside of the block as turned out of the box in which it had been exported. The butters affected had been exported in containers of foreign timber. Not all butters in these packages were faulted, but sufficient adverse reports were received to warrant dairying companies exercising more care in the selection of butter-box material. Dairy companies were advised to this effect by way of addresses and a circular letter.

WHEY BUTTER.

Although factory-managers have given more attention and care during the past year in connection with the manufacture of this class of butter there is yet room for much improvement in quality. Many cheese-factory managers are inclined to look upon whey cream as merely an incident in the day's work. The exercise of more care and cleanliness in the factory in handling the cream and a more frequent delivery would be of greater assistance towards the production of a higher-quality whey butter.

INTERNATIONAL BUTTER TRADE AFFECTED BY IMPORT DUTIES.

In the year under review the international butter trade has been subjected to some changes, brought about by the imposition of new or increased duties in Germany and United States of America. During our preceding financial year Germany imported a quantity of butter, which relieved the markets of the United Kingdom to a considerable extent. Much of this butter was forwarded to