

those in charge of the poultry-markets, the position in regard to the offering of ailing stock for sale has improved, but there are still some poultry-keepers who do not seem to realize their responsibility in this matter.

"A matter that seems to call for attention is the state of some crates used for the carriage of market poultry. When poultry-keepers wish to sell a number of birds they usually send to the auction-mart proprietors for the loan of crates. The same crates are in almost constant use, and at times become insanitary, and can be responsible for a certain amount of infection being spread.

"Wallaceville Poultry Station.—The Wallaceville Poultry Breeding and Experimental Station continues to render a very useful service to the industry.

"Five interesting feeding-tests were conducted during the past year, and the results of these tests will be published in the *Journal of Agriculture*.

"A good number of breeding-birds, hatching-eggs, and day-old chicks were supplied at reasonable rates to those poultry-keepers requiring fresh blood.

"During the year two Australorp (Utility Black Orpington) cockerels and six hens were imported from the New South Wales Department of Agriculture. Two White Leghorn cockerels, three pullets, and one Langshan cockerel were also imported from England. Eggs and stock from these birds will be available at reasonable rates to those requiring a change of blood.

"All young stock have been trap-nested for the past two seasons. Therefore, during the coming season all hens in the special pens will have produced over two hundred eggs of good quality during their first year's production.

"Instructional Staff.—The three district Poultry Instructors have had a busy year. They have done good work, and their services have been in keen demand. Some 1,697 visits of instruction were made during the year.

"In conclusion, I desire to express my appreciation to those who co-operated with me in the work of this section during the past year."

WOOL.

The instructional service in connection with the production and preparation of wool for marketing has been carried out during the year by Mr. J. E. Duncan, assisted by Mr. H. R. Lusk, who was added to the staff during the year.

I append hereunder Mr. Duncan's report:—

"Contrary to the general opinion held a year ago, wool-values have remained remarkably firm in spite of the very uncertain international situation, and fluctuation of prices over the whole of the selling season just closed has been unusually small. The range of prices has also been abnormally restricted, with no great difference in value between fine wools and crossbreds. The following table shows at a glance the position over the last five years:—

Wool sold at Public Auction.	1938-39.	1937-38.	1936-37.	1935-36.	1934-35.
Offered (bales)	727,997	687,718	668,397	768,933	527,283
Sold (bales) ..	706,776	614,609	663,798	737,454	471,512
Sold (lb.) ..	240,813,735	210,151,212	226,089,994	258,270,784	162,538,056
Total proceeds	£9,220,741	£8,793,873	£14,903,257	£9,840,427	£4,401,010
Average price—					
Per bale ..	£13 0s. 11d.	£14 6s. 2d.	£22 9s. 0d.	£13 6s. 10d.	£9 6s. 8d.
Per pound	9.189d.	10.043d.	15.82d.	9.144d.	6.498d.

"As will be noted, the price received by the sheep-farmer for his wool is not much different this year as compared with last season.

"Acknowledged world authorities on wool matters admit that long-range predictions of the trend likely to be followed by the wool-market are so untrustworthy as to be virtually useless, for, as any one who takes the trouble to study wool-prices over the last twenty years can see, the fluctuations have been at times both violent and sudden. In spite of this, however, there seems to be a growing body of opinion that artificial substitutes have already appreciably reduced the upper limit to which wool-prices are likely to rise in the future. On this account, the man who is depending on any big rise in prices to extricate him from his difficulties is clinging to a very slender shred of hope.

"With regard to the question of artificial wool substitutes just mentioned, new and improved synthetic fibres continue to be announced at more or less frequent intervals, and the total production of the various types has now reached a staggering total; in fact, in 1938 the total world production of synthetic fibres was actually slightly in excess of world wool-production, reckoned on a clean-scoured basis. Of course, it is true that all of this vast quantity of man-made fibre does not enter into direct competition with wool, but a large proportion of it does, and the sheep-farmers of the world can no longer afford to ignore it and merely rest on their laurels with a false sense of security in the knowledge that 'wool is best.' That slogan still remains true, but by an ever-diminishing margin. The best scientists available in the totalitarian countries are continually striving after a fibre which will be the perfect substitute for wool, and that their efforts are not altogether unavailing is shown by the fact that one by one they have imitated the valuable attributes of wool. First they improve the tensile strength of their products, then their elasticity, next even imitating the crimp in wool, and now, to quote a recent report from the International Wool Secretariat on the Leipzig Fair, 'particularly striking was