

COW-TESTING.

NOTES ON THE SEASON'S WORK.

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THE extension of the cow-testing movement this season has been gratifying, and bears splendid evidence to the fact that dairy-farmers are improving their herds, and are doing so by building on sound basic principles. There are some twenty associations in operation this season, and already there are others mooted for next season.

The associations represent the testing of some 25,000 cows this season. These monthly tests prove good educative factors when taken in the right way. The dairyman has a chance to get a better idea of cow-nature, and interesting avenues of thought are open to the dairyman who is a student.

Possibly the matter which puzzles some cow-testing-association members most is the variation which occasionally occurs in the individual tests of a cow. This seldom applies to many cows of the herd, it being the general experience that tests do not vary more than three or four tenths from month to month. Still, some cows do vary very considerably at times, and over 1 per cent. of variation may be evidenced in the tests of certain cows over two consecutive periods. This does not indicate that the testing is wrong, for we have ample evidence that such variations occur where the strictest care is taken with the sampling and testing. Further than this, it is our experience that even where the sampling and testing are right, where the cows are milked punctually on the stroke of the clock, and where cows are treated kindly and never hurried—even under these ideal conditions—variations of over 1 per cent. on the Babcock bottle are to be found occasionally in the test of a few cows between two consecutive months.

Such variations might suggest that cow-testing is not sufficiently reliable for the dairy-farmer. We believe it evidences the fact that one or two tests only for the season may be very misleading, and that tests should be made at regular intervals, monthly, during the whole lactation period to ensure good results. With a number of tests variations tend to counteract themselves. In any case it must be remembered that very few members have even one cow showing the extreme variations indicated above.

A comparison of cow-testing-association returns and factory returns for the season are interesting. In one association it was found that