

BUSH SICKNESS.

PROGRESS OF THE INVESTIGATION.

A VISIT was made last month by the Hon. W. D. S. MacDonald, Minister of Agriculture, to the Department's bush-sickness experimental farm at Mamaku, in order to look into recent operations carried out there. Mr. MacDonald, who for some time represented the district, has taken a keen practical interest in the bush-sickness investigation for a number of years. In the course of an address given by him at Rotorua during his visit to the district Mr. MacDonald, after paying a tribute to the work of the departmental officers concerned, made the following statement on the subject under notice:—

The progress of the investigation into the cause of bush sickness and the measures necessary for combating it has been necessarily slow, seeing that each of the various experiments which have had to be undertaken with cattle and sheep have occupied any time from six months to two years. But, though slow, steady and definite progress has been made, and the position to-day may be summarized as follows:—

1. The cause of the trouble lies in the fact that the soil is deficient in certain chemical constituents which should be available to be taken up by the herbage if animals feeding upon it are to maintain sound health and condition.

2. Analyses of soil, grasses, and parts of the bodies of animals living in the affected country all show a deficiency of iron as compared with what is found in outside "healthy" country.

3. Treatment of affected animals with syrup of phosphate of iron, if continued steadily over a sufficiently long period (from eight to twelve weeks), will effect a cure even in animals in the advanced stage of the trouble and kept entirely on bush-sick land during treatment. This has been proved over and over again. Licks containing iron have also proved useful, although not so certain in their effects as the administration of the syrup of phosphate of iron. Experiments in the direction of applying medicinal treatment in a simple way by treating the drinking-water are also in operation.