

The Horticulture Division :—

Hedgehogs are now becoming fairly plentiful in a number of places in New Zealand, but are, of course, not often seen, as they lie hidden during the day. They certainly do devour slugs, snails, worms, and large insects, and naturalists regard them as friends to gardeners. Gardeners, however, usually regard them as friends only when they are outside the garden, for they also eat young plants and roots—not to mention milk, meat, hen's eggs, and young chicks. English horticultural journals frequently contain matter regarding slugs and snails, but they never advise the use of the hedgehog, which is a native of England. Frogs are useful for the control of woodlice, but so far as we are aware they do not eat slugs and snails. Readily effective means for the control of these pests are clean cultivation and the free use of air-slaked quicklime after dark.

Grading of Butter and Cheese for Export.—During the twelve months from August, 1922, to July, 1923, the following quantities were graded by the Dairy Division at the various ports, amounts for the corresponding previous yearly period being given in parentheses: Butter, 67,850 tons (50,548); cheese, 61,220 tons (63,790). These figures represent a net increase of 20.1 per cent. in butterfat production for butter- and cheese-making in the 1922-23 period.

Fees for Grading of Dairy-produce.—Amending regulations under the Dairy Industry Act fix the fee for butter at 1.05d. per box and for cheese at 1.40d. per crate. In the case of butter or cheese forwarded for export from a registered factory, creamery, or private dairy, the fee is payable by the manufacturer on demand; otherwise it is payable by the owner of the produce. Where it is found that the total amount paid in respect of grading-fees in any year ending the 31st March exceeds the cost, as determined by the Minister of Agriculture, of the dairy-grading service, including the salary and expenses of the Government Dairy-produce Officer in London, the Minister may credit to the payers of fees, towards the fees payable by them during the next succeeding year, the amount paid or payable in excess of such cost, in the proportion in which each payer contributed during the period in question.

Grading of New Zealand Hemp.—Amending regulations dealing with the grading and export of stripper-tow (carded stripper-slips) were published in the *Gazette* of 12th July. Three grades are established for this by-product, together with prescriptions for size of bales, tagging, &c.

Local Wool-sales.—During the season 1st July, 1922, to 30th June, 1923, there was offered at the wool-sales in New Zealand a total of 509,880 bales of wool, of which 457,547 bales were sold, the average price per pound being 10.40d. In the 1921-22 season 440,014 bales were offered locally and 405,125 sold, at an average of 6.06d. per pound.

British Market for Peas and Beans.—The following information was cabled by the High Commissioner, London, on 4th August: *Peas*—New Zealand Maple have arrived freely; stocks on hand and awaiting discharge at docks are more than sufficient for present requirements. July shipments sold for 80s. per quarter; September-October shipments, 82s. 6d.; very little forward business. Tasmanian are scarce; July-August shipments sold at 92s. Small sales of blue reported; New Zealand 90s. ex store, and 82s. 6d. asked for parcels to arrive. Japanese cheap; new crop hand-picked marrow-fats, delivery to be in two equal lots in November and December, quoted at £22 10s. per ton. *Beans*—Sale slow. English winter making 8s. 10d. to 9s. 6d. per cwt., according to quality; Pigeon, 12s. to 18s. per cwt. Chinese horse, August-October shipments, quoted at 10s. 3d. per cwt.