

2. There is no possible objection to be raised, from a scientific sanitary point of view, to dressed carcasses hanging in the same apartment as is used for slaughtering purposes, provided that such material as blood, offal, &c., is cleared away, and the floor-drains, &c., thoroughly cleaned frequently, thus obviating the possibility of putrefactive changes taking place in this material before its removal.

The Christchurch abattoir consists of one huge apartment, with offal-rooms at either end, and is a quite up-to-date structure in every way. It has an excellent water-supply—both hot and cold—and this is constantly utilised for cleansing purposes. On no occasion could I detect any objectionable odour within the building, even while slaughtering was going on busily. There is nothing objectionable in the odour of freshly removed viscera. It is absurd to assume that, while a necessary portion of the animal body during life, it becomes a source of danger when removed from the body immediately after death. All stomachs, intestines, &c., of cattle are taken from the main apartment immediately after removal from the carcass. So also it is absurd to talk of fresh blood as being capable of giving off nauseating fumes. It has no nauseating smell, and it is, in fact, as good and as wholesome as is fresh meat.

On my last previous visit to the abattoir—about 2 p.m. on the 14th June of this year—slaughtering for the day was concluded, and the whole of the interior of the building was thoroughly clean and sweet.

3. The cattle-blood channel is wrongly situated, it being too far from the pithing-pens, and as a consequence the blood from newly slaughtered animals, instead of draining, as it should, almost directly into this channel, has to run over some 3 ft. of sloping concrete floor before reaching it. Through some error, this blood-channel was placed in a position other than that indicated when the original plans of the present building were revised, one alteration provided for during this revision being the placing of the blood-drain in its proper position, nearer the pens. At the same time, if the slaughtering contractors fulfilled the conditions of their contract—which include the maintenance of cleanliness in both buildings and yards—there need be, with the present drain, no accumulation of blood on the floor-surface. Such an accumulation, though in no degree dangerous, is certainly unsightly. I spoke to one of the contractors, and suggested that he and his fellows should between them engage a lad whose duty should be the continual removal of blood to the drain by sweeping. I also instructed the Inspector to see that the blood was always kept swept away, and on the occasions of my last two visits this was being done.

It might be suggested that this, by causing extra labour, imposes a hardship upon the contractors. Such, however, can hardly be the case, seeing that they, when making their contracts, did so with a full knowledge of the structural conditions of the abattoir, and of the fact that they had to maintain cleanliness. As a matter of fact, this abattoir was designed with a view of the work of slaughtering being carried out by the Council's own employees, and not for slaughtering by different contractors.

4. I cannot see how the cattle and sheep pens and races can be described as inconvenient, or how difficulty should arise in getting sheep to travel up the inclined plane leading to the killing-pens. As regards the latter point, sheep travel with ease to much greater heights at various freezing-works—as, for instance, at Fairfield and Pareora.

With regard to the alleged unduly dirty condition of the paved yards, it must be remembered that when a number of stock are confined for several hours in a small yard a considerable amount of excreta will necessarily be deposited on the floor-surface, and in these yards, although some provision is made for liquid matter to get away, it is obvious that solid or semi-solid material can only be got rid of by the manual process of sweeping. This material is, and has been in the past, removed daily, the open channels surrounding these yards, and provided for the purpose of carrying off liquid drainage, being cleaned at the same time.

The two large cattle-pens, one entirely and one partially unpaved, were open to legitimate criticism, and they should have been paved before the winter came on. At the same time, when I visited them they were very muddy; but the mud was not so deep as was alleged in the Press report, which stated that the cattle were standing in filth “nearly up to their hocks.” I saw cattle in them, and the mud did not completely cover their hooves. In the partially paved pen one beast was confined, and this animal, evidently from preference, was standing in the unpaved portion, although at full liberty to go on the concrete flooring if it desired.

A large amount of work is done in these yards, particularly the outer one, it being, as I understand, the practice of the contractors to use them for drafting purposes. Thus, if they have in their charge, say, thirty cattle belonging to a particular butcher, and he desires ten slaughtered on one day the whole thirty are brought into this yard, ten drafted out into the inner yard, and the balance taken back to the paddocks. This drafting should really be done in the paddocks, but I understand that no yards suitable for this purpose exist there.

While I am of opinion that in the newspaper report an unjustifiably serious view, especially as regards the possible danger to meat-consumers, was taken of the condition of these yards, they certainly are not in a good condition, and it is necessary that immediate steps be taken to improve them. During the prevalence of frost concrete flooring cannot be laid down satisfactorily, but, as a temporary measure, shingle could be carted into them, and later, at the earliest possible date that weather-conditions permit, they must be concreted. It is only just to the Inspector to state that he has on more than one occasion called the attention of the Abattoir Committee to the necessity for the proper paving of these yards. It must be borne in mind that under their conditions of contract the slaughtering contractors are really responsible for the maintenance of cleanliness in all the yards.

5. The fences are not well built, and some of the gates need repairing. This is a matter which, though not affecting sanitation, requires immediate attention from the Abattoir Committee.