

*Cool Storage of Cheese.*

Why cool storage has not been used more extensively in New Zealand for cheese awaiting shipment is difficult of explanation. It is sufficient to say that the reason does not lie in the want of advocates, for it has been persistently recommended year after year by the Dairy Division and others. However, "we are not as those without hope," because the cooling of cheese under modern conditions has already been established at the Port of Auckland for a number of years, and has recently been altered and brought up to date there. At New Plymouth, where large quantities of cheese are handled, something has also been done, although here the requirements were not fulfilled at the time most needed during the past season. On representations being made from the Division this omission was rectified in some measure, but only after large quantities of cheese had left the stores in a heated condition. The position at Patea, where all the cheese from the South Taranaki district is graded, was also unsatisfactory as regards cool storage. The accumulation of cheese caused by the shortage of shipping-space, and the absence of sufficient storage space for the heavy daily arrival of consignments, made it impossible to regulate the temperature of the cheese-chambers as desired. The West Coast Refrigerating Company at Patea, however, fully recognized the importance of providing better facilities for dealing with the cheese, and a start was made some time ago to increase the accommodation; but much delay occurred in obtaining delivery of the steel required in the construction of the building, which, it is now hoped, will be ready for next season.

Wellington, being the central shipping-port for cheese, and having as yet no cool store for this product, the past season here has been one of great difficulty. To relieve the congestion at other ports huge quantities of cheese had to be held for many weeks in the ordinary wharf-sheds of the Harbour Board. The bulk of cheese transshipments during the months of December to March had been overheated prior to arrival, and remained at a temperature of 70° and over until placed on board the Home steamers. The butter-fat in many thousands of cheese was found to be in a semi-liquid condition, and in some cases leaking from the produce. Both the cheese and packages were stained or discoloured and presented a very bad appearance, and the loss sustained must have been enormous. In many cases the shipping companies refused to load the cheese unless they were furnished with letters of indemnity against claims for the damaged cargoes.

The cheese graded at Wellington was practically all dealt with in the Harbour Board's cheese-store. Little of this was overheated prior to arrival, consequently it suffered less in appearance, but the temperature was little below that of the cheese in the ordinary wharf-sheds. Fortunately the Harbour Board has definitely decided to enlarge the cheese-store, and has also placed an order for the necessary refrigerating plant to control the temperature of the building. When completed the extension of the store will provide a capacity for cooling about 300 tons daily and accommodation for approximately 40,000 crates of cheese.

The damage to cheese in the North Island caused by overheating has been very serious indeed: the bad flavours were greatly accentuated, and the body became rough and mealy or more or less spoiled.

The dairy companies of Southland are to be congratulated on having made arrangements with the Bluff Harbour Board to provide a suitable cool store for cheese in time for the season's output. This store has been found to answer the purpose admirably, and proved a great boon to the industry in that part of the Dominion.

*Transshipment of Cheese.*

In order to ensure some regularity of despatch in shipments of cheese to the English market it is necessary to collect transshipments in Wellington from New Plymouth and Patea, and occasionally from Dunedin and the Bluff. These transshipments are unfortunately always carried as ordinary cargo in the coastal steamers, no provision whatever being made to regulate the temperature in the ships' holds; consequently the cheese brought to Wellington, more especially the transshipments from New Plymouth and Patea, frequently arrive in a most unsatisfactory condition. In the warm weather the cheese are much overheated, the rinds becoming greasy and soft, thereby creating serious damage to the produce, and any previous cooling which the cheese may have undergone before loading on the coastal steamers is rendered almost valueless, to say nothing of the additional loss incurred by dairy companies in meeting the prior charge for cool storage.

The number of damaged transshipments of cheese which have arrived in Wellington in the course of the past season was greatly in excess of that of the previous year, this being brought about by the hot weather experienced from December to March. Until such time as the dairy companies take up this important question with the shipping companies concerned, and until arrangements are made for the carriage of the cheese at lower temperatures, the produce cannot be delivered to the Home steamers in good order and condition. It requires no superior wisdom to enable one to see the harmful effect which must take place to the cheese under the present obsolete system. Nor indeed is it reasonable to expect that the reputation of New Zealand as a cheese-producing country will not suffer loss on this account.

Our system of transportation in regard to cheese between the New Zealand and English ports is conducted in the most approved manner, the temperature of the cheese-chambers being regulated at from 45° to 50°. Surely, then, it is incumbent upon those engaged in the industry to provide similar facilities for transshipments on the coast of New Zealand.