

VINEYARDS AND VINEHOUSES.

The area under vineyards is estimated at 454 acres. The acting vine and wine instructor reports that the grape crop in a number of districts was considerably lighter than that of the previous year. This was due to the inclement weather experienced during the fruiting season, and also to shortage of labour. As a result the quantity of wine manufactured was a good deal less than the return for last season. Approximately 60,000 gallons of wine were produced, which at a conservative estimate of 3s. per gallon represents a total value of £9,000 for the year's vintage. The demand for New Zealand wines is still rapidly increasing, and growers have no difficulty in disposing of their stocks at remunerative prices.

There has been practically no increase in the number of vinehouses since my last report, the figure standing at 850. The great increase in price of building-material has no doubt affected enterprise in this line. The yield from the 850 glasshouses is estimated at 522,750 lb. of grapes, which at 1s. per pound represents a value of £26,137.

Inspection of both vineyards and vinehouses has been carried out during the year.

BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY.

It is very satisfactory to report that the beekeeping industry at the present time is in a very flourishing condition. The season has been a good one, and local prices are unusually high, whilst from £150 to £170 per ton has been realized on the English market. The position of the average beekeeper should therefore be a very favourable one.

Export facilities, although unreliable, have been periodically available, and the last of the previous season's honey has just been cleared.

The apiary instructors have carried out the work of their department in a satisfactory manner. Lectures and demonstrations, both private and public, have been made a strong feature of the season's work. The honorary Apiary Inspectors have also done very good work, and have rendered a valuable service both to the Department and the beekeeping industry in assisting to keep their respective districts free of disease. The voluntary services of these men are highly appreciated, particularly in the face of the inconvenience many of them are known to have experienced as a result of the present shortage of labour.

One of the most important features of the work during the year has been the reorganization of the apiary at the Ruakura Farm of Instruction. Considerable experimental work has been carried out there under the supervision of Mr. G. V. Westbrooke, apiary instructor, Auckland, who has been ably assisted by the apiarist in charge, Mr. A. B. Trythall. The experiments include—Different methods of laying out an apiary; testing different makes of hives; metal spacers for frames; shallow honey-supers; taking daily temperatures and weights of hives; stands for hives. An experiment is now in progress to ascertain the quantity of wax that can be produced by a hive worked for that purpose only. This is, however, not yet sufficiently advanced to report on. Results of these tests will appear in the *Departmental Journal*, and should prove both valuable and profitable to all interested in beekeeping.

Another important work in hand at present is the establishment of a queen-rearing apiary at the Tauranga Horticultural Station. It is hoped to have this very necessary scientific branch of apiculture well established at an early date.

In July, 1917, regulations for the registration of all apiaries, from one hive upwards, came into force. Up to the present some 4,474 persons, totalling 50,721 hives, have registered. There are, however, apparently still numbers of persons who have failed to register, notwithstanding the fact that full publicity of the regulations has been given both in the papers and by notices issued from this office. It is evident more drastic steps will require to be taken with those who have not complied with the regulations.

Export of Honey.

According to the Customs figures 2,819 cwt. of honey, valued at £7,991, was exported during the year. This represents an increase of 1,247 cwt. as compared with the previous year's figures. The following figures show the quantity and value of honey exported during the last five years ended 31st March: 1914, 1,885 cwt., value £3,716; 1915, 2,456 cwt., value £4,763; 1916, 2,390 cwt., value £6,067; 1917, 1,572 cwt., value £3,554; 1918, 2,819 cwt., value £7,991.

The apiary instructors who carried out the grading report that, generally speaking, the standard of packing has greatly improved, and the quality of the honey sent forward is prime grade. A few lines had to be rejected on account of leaky tins and fermentation.

STAFF.

As previously reported, the staff of the division has been seriously depleted as a result of the military requirements of the country. The weakness thus created has, however, been repaired as far as possible by the appointment of temporary officers. These officers, although lacking departmental experience, have performed their duties very creditably, and have materially assisted in maintaining the efficiency of the division during the year. I have much pleasure in reporting that all officers have, under the adverse circumstances, carried out their work in a satisfactory manner.