

dealt with inquiries regarding the possibility of importing New Zealand meat into various foreign countries, these questions having been undertaken by the Veterinary Officer on account of the fact that the disabilities in the way of such importations were in almost every case closely associated with the recognition or otherwise of the New Zealand meat-inspection system.

For some considerable time after the inception of this branch matters of other than a technical nature in connection with New Zealand meat were dealt with by the Produce Department. It was found, however, that there was a certain amount of overlapping in the work, and it was therefore decided some years ago to allocate to the Veterinary Officer all matters in connection with meat, whether of a technical or commercial nature. This arrangement, which is still in existence, has been attended with excellent results. It has, of course, entailed additional duties, consisting, *inter alia*, of attention to market conditions, and to numerous inquiries of a commercial nature regarding not only meat but the numerous animal by-products; and since the alteration was made that portion of the weekly produce cablegram dealing with the meat market and prices has been prepared by the branch under review.

In addition to this, exhaustive inquiries have been conducted and reports made upon a variety of subjects, as, for instance, the comparative costs of discharge and storage, and of wholesale and retail prices, of meat at London and at Bristol; the shortage in the world's beef-supplies; the world's hide-supplies, &c.; and monthly tables are prepared for the use of the Government Statistician, showing the retail prices in London of various articles of food.

EFFECTS OF THE WAR.

Circumstances arising out of the war have to a very great extent added to the work of this branch, while every effort has been made to carry out the duties for which the appointment was originally made. Early in 1915 the question of the shortage of insulated tonnage was handed over to the Veterinary Officer for attention, and since March, 1915, when the New Zealand meat-supply was taken over on behalf of the Imperial authorities, all questions regarding this somewhat important subject have been dealt with by the branch under consideration. To illustrate the amount of additional work entailed it might be pointed out that since the completion of the original negotiations for purchase all communications relating to the supply of meat to the Imperial Government have passed through this office. Briefly, the work involved consists of receiving from the New Zealand Government bills of lading, disbursement accounts, balance-sheets, &c., in connection with the meat, checking and dissecting these documents, recording them, and transmitting them to the representative of the Board of Trade. In addition, the branch deals with numerous questions arising out of the Imperial Government meat-supply scheme—such, for example, as disputes as to the classification of various grades of meat, the dressing of meat, the disposal of surplus meat not required for the armies, &c.—and keeps the Board of Trade supplied with statistics as to the quantities of meat in store at various dates, and information as to the departure of, and the meat-cargoes carried by, steamers from New Zealand. In order to indicate the amount of work necessitated by the above it might be pointed out that since the inception of the Imperial Government meat-supply scheme documents covering the meat shipped by no less than 134 steamers have been dealt with, the branch having handled, checked, and recorded about 3,300 bills of lading, representing a total of approximately 10,300,000 carcasses of mutton and lamb and almost 1,100,000 quarters of beef, of a value of over £13,000,000; and many other documents and communications in connection with the meat-supply scheme have passed through the hands of the Veterinary Officer.

A great amount of work on the subject of the Imperial Government meat-supply has also been entailed during the past year in keeping New Zealand fully advised by cable of the conditions existing here; and more recently the Veterinary Officer's Branch has provided the statistics and information necessary for the negotiations which have taken place regarding the prices to be paid for this season's output of New Zealand meat, a great deal of time and attention having necessarily been devoted to this matter alone.

DAIRY-PRODUCE INSPECTOR'S BRANCH.

During the past year the work of inspecting dairy-produce has been carried out as in previous years. On account of the difficulties attending storage and transport the cheese shipments have suffered considerably and frequently arrived here much out of condition, the unavoidable storage of cheese at high temperatures in New Zealand before shipment having been the chief cause of the trouble. In addition to the poorer quality of the cheese, the losses in weight due to shrinkage have been very considerable, and to the usual work of inspection has been added the witnessing of check-weighing of parcels of cheese at more frequent intervals than is usual in normal times. In addition to the work of inspection in London, visits have also been paid to the leading wholesale provision-houses of the United Kingdom, and all complaints regarding quality, short weight in butter or cheese, excessive water-content in butter, &c., have received prompt attention and have been reported upon accordingly.

Although it was originally intended that the Inspector of Dairy-produce should confine his duties solely to the technical work—namely, the inspection of dairy-produce and reporting upon the quality thereof—it was found that commercial and other matters pertaining to dairying were so closely allied that it was finally decided that he should attend to all matters relating to the dairy industry. Since the readjustment of duties the work carried out has been of a much more comprehensive nature than formerly.