

Research on briquetting of waste coal was continued right throughout the year. A summary of the work was published in the fifty-eighth Annual Report of the Laboratory, Appendices I and II.

Health.—Foodstuffs in great variety and a few other general samples were submitted by the Department of Health. Of seven brands of baking-powder examined two were deficient in carbon dioxide.

The beers examined were free from lead and arsenic, but there is a tendency for salt to be present in excess. In one case as much as 120 grains per gallon was noted. The accepted limit in Great Britain is 50 grains.

The breads comprised brown, wholemeal, and wheatmeal loaves, and were all satisfactory.

Butter in most cases complied with the regulations, and only four samples exceeded the standard for water.

There were several cases of mislabelling of various food products.

Face-powders in use in Japan were reported to have contained white-lead, so an examination was made of six well-known brands on the Wellington market. All proved quite free from injurious metals.

Milk.—The number of milk-samples officially taken during the year was 2,697, made up as follows: Wellington City supply, 1,730; Christchurch City supply, 9; country districts controlled by the Medical Officer of Health, Wellington, 609; country districts controlled by the Medical Officer of Health, Dunedin, 349.

Wellington City.—In 1924 the milk-supply was reported almost free from wilful adulteration. Of 1,740 samples taken, 8 only were deficient in fat, and 8 watered. In 1925, the year under review, a milk shortage consequent on cold, wet weather provided strong incentive to watering. The number of samples examined was practically the same—viz., 1,730—but 10 were decidedly low in fat, and 23 had been watered to the extent of at least 5 per cent. In one case 80 per cent. of water was found. There were also 16 warnings for slight deficiencies. There were 10 prosecutions for staleness and 17 warnings. For dirt there were 17 warnings, and 2 prosecutions.

Country Districts under Control of the Medical Officer of Health, Wellington.—Of the 609 samples taken during the year, 7 were found to be deficient in fat, 7 were found to be watered, 9 were slightly below standard, and in 22 instances the suppliers were warned for dirt. There was little improvement in cleanliness during the year.

Country Districts under Control of the Medical Officer of Health, Dunedin.—Pending the appointment of an analyst in Dunedin, milk-supplies were forwarded to Wellington for analysis, the use of bottles preservative with mercuric chloride enabling this to be done satisfactorily.

As in other districts, the conditions as to cleanliness require to be considerably improved. Of the 349 samples taken in the Otago District, 9 were deficient in fat, 9 were found to be watered, 5 were slightly below standard, and in 56 instances the suppliers were warned for dirt.

Plunket Society.—Two hundred and two analyses of human and humanized milks were made for Plunket Nurses during the year.

Other Departments.—The amount of work carried out for the Customs Department differed little from that in previous years. Numerous samples of departmental stores were submitted for examination by the Engineering Branch of the Post and Telegraph Department, and by the Stores Control Board.

Analyses were carried out for the Public Works Department, of water and construction material.

For the Main Highways Board tests were made of numerous samples of tar and bitumen, and occasionally defective sections of roadway were examined to determine cause of failure.

A number of exhibits relative to various crimes that had been committed were submitted by the Police Department.

The Railway Department required analyses of deposit from firebox, and of certain railway stores.

Gas Control.—The testing of town gas for calorific value has been recently included in the work undertaken by the Laboratory. Regular tests of the gas supplied in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch were made during the year, and will be commenced shortly in Dunedin.

Auckland Branch.

During the year 1,739 samples were analysed for Government Departments, the bulk of which—viz., 1,709—were forwarded by the Health Department.

Christchurch Branch.

The samples analysed from the opening of the Laboratory in August to December, 1925, totalled 357, of which the Health Department supplied 342.

Explosives Branch.

Explosives and Dangerous Goods Act.—As this report is not available until the end of June it will be included in the next year's Laboratory Report.

CONCLUSION.

I wish to express my appreciation of the willing and efficient service rendered by officers of all grades during the year, and to thank sectional officers and the heads of sub-departments for their hearty co-operation and support at all times.

The valuable assistance rendered by other Government Departments is also gratefully acknowledged.

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