

LIVE-STOCK.

As will be gathered from the appended report of the Director of the Live-stock Division, the Statistician's returns for the year 1928-29 giving the numbers of farm animals in the Dominion, show that sheep increased in number by 1,917,572 as compared with the previous year, and cattle of all classes by 172,021. The increase in dairy cows alone was 18,665. In the case of swine, however, it is regrettable to note that a decrease of 30,166 occurred. Horses also decreased by 8,174.*

This large increase in the number of sheep, and the noticeable increase in the number of cattle, can be regarded as being mainly due to the great improvement in farming practice which has come about by the increased use of fertilizers and by better grassland-management. Seeing that the area under settlement has not appreciably increased, while the number of dairy cattle has not increased to a very noticeable extent, the yield of dairy-produce has been much greater in proportion; and here again fertilizers, improved grassland-management, herd-testing, improved quality of herds from a yield standpoint, and better animal husbandry must be credited with the marked increase in the volume of these products which has taken place.

As regards pigs, it is a matter for regret that they have decreased in number, especially as the prices received for porkers and bacon pigs exported to the United Kingdom proved to be payable, and have been still better during the season now in progress. The position of the pig industry demands special attention. A scheme of special instruction and advice to farmers on the subject of management and feeding has been elaborated and put into operation; but, while this will no doubt help, more active steps are needed. The bulk of our pigs are kept on dairy-farms, and the great attention which dairy-farmers have given of late to the increase of production from their herds, and the results attained, seem to have caused the very useful and paying pig to be thrown, so to speak, too much into the background. The main function of the pig seems to be looked upon as being that of a useful means of getting rid of separated milk and of whey, and the quantity of these by-products produced could, if properly utilized and supplemented by other suitable food material, feed a great many more pigs than is the case at present. In meat-meal, for instance, we have a concentrated food material produced in the Dominion, which forms a valuable supplementary food to whey, its composition supplying the nitrogenous content which whey lacks. Separated milk is quite a good food in itself, and it needs very little addition. For the winter feeding of pigs meat-meal makes a valuable addition to roots and other foodstuffs when dairy by-products are scarce.

VETERINARY SERVICES.

The continued development of the dairy industry, of which the most marked features are the increased carrying-capacity of dairy-farms and the consequent closer segregation of dairy cattle, together with the increased yielding capacity of cows, is causing the necessity for skilled veterinary services being available for dairy-farmers to become progressively greater. Owners need to do all that is possible to conserve the health and productivity of their cows, and to avoid loss through inability to get the proper treatment applied promptly whenever disease of any kind makes its appearance. More than that, a skilled veterinarian, always available, can be of great assistance in advising, on the spot, on disease-prevention methods, feeding questions, and herd-management generally.

Under the existing system, Government Veterinarians, who are comparatively few in number, each with a large district to cover, supplement their official duties by giving as much advice and assistance to farmers in live-stock ailments and disease-prevention as they are able to do, but the needs of the dairy industry are far in excess of this. What is needed is an organized veterinary service under which skilled qualified men would be engaged to give their whole time to practice among dairy-farms within a definite area, and at the same time act as advisers generally upon all questions bearing upon the health and productivity of dairy herds. The experience of veterinary surgeons who have attempted independent private practice in dairying districts has been that the net earnings they are able to collect do not provide a reasonably sufficient income; hence some other system needs to be adopted in order to combat the avoidable wastage in dairy cows which occurs at present, owing to proper treatment, promptly applied, not being feasible through the lack of skilled advice always near at hand. It is not suggested that the Government should itself operate

* The interim returns for the year 1929-30, which have just come to hand, show further increases in sheep of 1,586,008, in all cattle of 275,179, and in dairy cows alone of 52,804. Pigs show a decrease of 72,912, and horses of 1,722.