

SECTION 3.—SOUTH AUCKLAND HEALTH DISTRICT.

Dr. BOYD, Medical Officer of Health.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The incidence of infectious diseases has been fairly high, and was especially remarkable for a sharp epidemic of bacillary dysentery which affected the district, principally during the months of March, April, and May. The infection, which was of a severe character, originated amongst the Maori population in the Central Auckland District, but, owing chiefly to the itinerant nature of the Maoris, the disease spread to the Southern District. Every effort was made to combat the epidemic, which ran a short and sharp course. The majority of the cases, some 80 per cent., occurred amongst the Maori population, probably due to lack of care in regard to nursing, and to unrecognized and concealed cases. Children were largely affected, approximately 50 per cent. of the cases being ten years of age or under, and the fatality-rate among the Maoris was about 25 per cent. Extra nurses and Inspectors were drafted to the affected area, which was thoroughly combed for unreported cases, many being thereby discovered and placed under isolation and treatment.

Enteric-fever notifications were also fairly high, especially amongst the Maori population in the Rotorua district, where twenty-six cases occurred in February, ten in June, and fifteen in July. Cases were removed to hospital wherever possible and inoculation of contacts carried out by the district nurse to Natives. Sanitation measures were also adopted.

Of the other diseases, scarlet fever and diphtheria have been the most prominent, the notification-rate of both being higher than the average. An outbreak of scarlet fever occurred in the Piopio district during August, some twenty cases occurring, affecting several households. Examination of school-children resulted in the detection of two suspicious cases, which might have spread the infection.

Notifications of puerperal fever were few, although all were carefully investigated and the necessary precautionary measures adopted. There is little that calls for comment in regard to the other diseases, except that the number of tuberculosis cases dropped by over 50 per cent. from that of the previous year.

GENERAL SANITATION.

There has been considerable improvement affected in regard to general sanitation during the year. Drainage and sewerage installations, both public and private, have shown good progress, and the supervision given to the collection and disposal of refuse and nightsoil in the various boroughs and town districts, together with the inspection of dumps, has materially contributed to the general improvement noted. Complaints and nuisances have been fully investigated, and the necessary action taken to rectify any unhealthy conditions found. Some of the sanitation improvements are noted hereunder:—

Ngaruawahia: Special water-flushed closets for both sexes were erected at the regatta-ground and careful supervision given to scrupulous cleanliness during regatta week, when some five thousand Maoris congregated. Despite the prevalence of dysentery at the time, no cases were notified from the camp. Consideration was also given to a proposed drainage scheme.

Hamilton: A compulsory refuse-removal system was inaugurated and has been very efficiently controlled.

Cambridge: The Council decided to extend the sewerage scheme to include practically the whole area of the borough. A report was submitted for the information of the loans Board, and sites for septic tanks approved.

Matamata: Drainage reticulation is now almost complete. A thorough cleansing of the septic tank recently produced satisfactory results, and endeavour has been made to prevent river-pollution by ploughing material dislodged from the tanks into adjacent land.

Putaruru: A new nightsoil-dump was approved and operated during the year.

Rotorua: A favourable report on the proposed sewerage scheme was submitted to the Loans Board, and a start with the work will be made almost immediately.

Several conferences have been held with the Council regarding improvement at Whakarewarewa. Difficulties regarding responsibilities as amongst the Council, Native Department, and the Maoris have cropped up, but it is hoped that the matters will soon be satisfactorily settled and improvements put under way.

The improvement noted in sanitary plumbing and drainage is largely attributed to the application of the departmental regulations regarding this work to the majority of the area.

Other matters receiving attention have been the inspection of buildings and the issuing of condemnation or repair notices as required, and the supervision of offensive trades and of cemeteries. An annual inspection of hotels was also completed, and notification sent to the owners regarding necessary renovations and repairs, copies of which were also sent to the Licensing Committee concerned for its information when considering the issuing of licenses. The matter of the adoption of a suitable uniform set of by-laws by the County Councils has also received attention.