

POULTRY INDUSTRY.

The poultry industry is still suffering from want of proper organization, and this hampers producers in improving local marketing conditions, and exploring the possibilities of export of eggs or egg-pulp. Properly controlled, the industry is capable of contributing a valuable quota to the already high value of the Dominion's annual production, but, on the other hand, there is a danger that without better organization and improved marketing arrangements the industry will not progress as it should. At the last annual conference of the New Zealand Poultry Association a proposal aiming at bringing about better organization within the industry was discussed and carried, and has since been submitted to the Department for consideration, as legislation is required to give effect to it. It is hoped that something tangible will result.

I append hereto the report of the Chief Poultry Instructor :—

The past year has not been a particularly good one for producers. Owing chiefly to the fall in prices on the London market, no eggs were exported from the Dominion, and, as a result, the whole of the year's output has been consumed locally, made into pulp, or otherwise preserved for use during the winter season. During the greater part of the year low prices ruled for eggs when compared with food-costs, so that the average poultry-keeper had to be content with a small margin of profit over the cost of production.

While wheat is generally regarded as the staple grain for fowls, the question of its price must be taken into account by the poultry-keeper in order to make the maximum profit over cost of production from his flock. For example, the high prices charged for what is commonly termed fowl-wheat, much of which is of inferior quality, as compared with the proportionate low prices being asked for good-quality imported pollard, &c., has led many producers to experiment with a more economical ration by using more of the above-mentioned imported foods and considerably less wheat.

At the present time a great weakness connected with the industry is the manner in which eggs generally are presented for sale to the consuming public. Realizing the weaknesses in this respect, and with a view to bringing about an improved system whereby eggs would be sold according to their quality and weight, the Department has given the marketing side of the business much serious attention during the past year. A conference was arranged between departmental officers, representatives of producers, and others concerned in the disposal of eggs, but, owing chiefly to lack of organization among producers, the desired ends could not be achieved. This is much to be regretted, for there is no doubt that one of the best means of encouraging the production of standard weight eggs—viz., 2 oz. or over—and of increasing the demand on the part of the consumer, is to place the marketing of eggs on a proper footing; and to effect this the institution of a system whereby the eggs would be sold by weight after being tested for freshness is imperative. This, however, is a result that can only be accomplished through united action on the part of producers.

The great need of the industry is a better understanding of practical poultry-keeping by small farmers in order that more eggs will be produced, particularly during the winter months. The Department is doing everything possible to assist in this direction by supplying purebred utility stock and sittings of eggs from its Wallaceville Poultry Station at moderate prices. Literature giving practical advice on all phases of the industry is also obtainable at a moderate cost, and, in addition, a practical staff of Instructors is available for the purpose of addressing public meetings, giving demonstrations, and visiting plants by request. The value of the work carried out by the Instructors, four in number, when visiting plants, particularly in regard to culling unprofitable stock and in selecting the best specimens for breeding purposes, is having a gratifying effect in raising the producing-capacity of many flocks in the Dominion and in the increased monetary results being obtained.

While outbreaks of disease have shown a substantial decline during the year, it is to be regretted that complaints regarding troubles in stock arising from internal parasitic infestation have increased, and, in fact, several producers have suffered severe losses from this cause. As a result of experiments carried out at the Wallaceville Poultry Station in co-operation with the officers attached to the Veterinary Laboratory, the question of controlling both external and internal parasitic life is now much better understood than formerly.

Wallaceville Poultry Station.—The most important of the operations carried out at this station during the year was a continuation of experimental and investigational work, the chief aim being to throw light on some of the difficulties commonly met with in the management of poultry. Among other things that may be mentioned in which investigation was conducted, are the following: Ridding fowls of internal and external parasitic infestation by a nicotine preparation; feeding brooder chickens, and the value of skim-milk as compared with water when provided to brooder chicks; experiments regarding incubation; green leg in chickens; experiments regarding cannibal habits in chickens; experiments regarding the feeding of cockle-shell and oyster-shell; feeding iodine to fowls; feeding cod-liver oil to brooder chickens. The results of several of these experiments have been published in the *Journal of Agriculture*, and others will appear as opportunity arises. A further series of experiments and investigational work has been planned, some of which is now in progress. In order that more time may be devoted in connection with investigational work, the standard laying flock has been considerably reduced.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY.

In addition to the ordinary work along the lines of animal husbandry considerable propaganda work was instituted during the year in connection with the use of (1) meat-meal in conjunction with root crops for wintering store pigs; (2) meat-meal in conjunction with whey for calves; (3) meat-meal in conjunction with skim-milk for calves; (4) meat-meal for whey-fed sows; (5) meat-meal with whey for weaned pigs; (6) cattle and sheep licks; (7) the feeding of ensilage to sheep. It is recognized that whey being low in flesh-forming constituents or proteins is naturally not a satisfactory food when fed alone, and to supply a supplementary food rich in proteins meat-meal is a highly satisfactory supplement, and has the advantage that it is comparatively cheap compared with other foods which have been used and it is available throughout the Dominion as a by-product of the abattoirs and meat-export slaughterhouses. As a result of the advice given by officers of the Division individually, through the press, and by lectures, a considerable number of farmers have given meat-meal a trial, and are so satisfied with the results that it is anticipated that the use of meat-meal will be greatly extended this coming season. It is, of course, necessary that only meat-meal of good quality, free from hair and fibre, and containing from about 56 to 60 per cent. of protein be used for this purpose.