

it cannot be said that farmers get anything like good value for the money expended upon many of them. In certain cases which have been specially noted the price charged is out of all proportion to the intrinsic value of the ingredients present, even when it is recognized that the price is loaded with the costs of advertising, canvassing, &c.

Then as regards licks, these are invariably composed of comparatively inexpensive material and often sold at a high price. Moreover, they are usually sold indiscriminately without regard to particular conditions of soil deficiencies or the need for medicinal materials for the maintenance of health and production in different districts, and in many cases the money spent on them may not be recouped by any beneficial results. If farm animals are healthy and getting good nourishing food in sufficient quantity they do not need licks or anything else of a medicinal nature. It is evident that legislative action is necessary in order to prevent farmers being unduly and unreasonably exploited. Undue interference with the sale of all proprietary remedies is not suggested, but it is submitted that some effective form of regulation is badly needed. This could be brought about by the enactment of legislation requiring (1) all stock remedies to be officially registered, (2) a true description of the ingredients of each remedy and the price at which it is to be sold to be supplied with the application for registration, (3) evidence as to the efficacy of the remedy to be supplied with the application for registration, (4) the appointment of a competent authority to approve or disapprove registration, (5) the receptacle containing the remedy to have imprinted on a label affixed to it the weight or volume of the contained product and a description of its ingredients, this to constitute a warranty.

It is recommended that steps be taken to introduce legislation on these lines. The Department has done a good deal in discouraging the use of certain of the more blatantly objectionable remedies (one of these, for external application for mammites, contained a good proportion of cow-dung) but without statutory authority the required reform cannot be brought about.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL FERTILIZERS.

The falling-away in the use of artificial fertilizers in the autumn and winter of 1931 became so serious as to necessitate national action in an endeavour to restore the practice to an adequate level. The Government, therefore, in October subsidized the manufacture of superphosphate to the extent of 11s. per ton until the end of June, 1932, and the subsidy has been now renewed for a further twelve months. On the subsidy becoming operative superphosphate was reduced by 17s. 6d. per ton, making the cash price f.o.r. at works £3 17s. 6d. After some months, owing to the increased cost of sulphur brought about by the rise in dollar exchange, the price had to be advanced 5s. per ton, but has now been reduced to £4.

The lowering of price resultant on the operation of the subsidy has had a marked effect in stimulating the use of artificial fertilizers, as shown by the amount used in the January-June period of the past four years:—

							Tons.	Decrease from 1929. Tons.
1929	..	..	..	..	..	..	228,000	..
1930	..	..	..	..	..	..	212,000	16,000
1931	..	..	..	..	..	..	152,000	76,000
1932	..	..	..	..	..	..	222,000	6,000

From the above figures it can be seen that virtually the 1929 position has been recovered so far as actual tonnage used is concerned. The fact, however, that in the past three years cows have increased by over four hundred thousand would seem to show that there is considerable leeway yet to make up. This, however, is not as great, so far as dairying is concerned, as the figures indicate, inasmuch as top-dressing has steadily declined during the past two years on purely sheep-country, and almost the whole of the increase can be credited to dairying grassland.

CROP CERTIFICATION.

Crop certification whereby superiority of type or strain is guaranteed has been considerably extended during the year. In its commencement the service was a free one, but the great increase in crops certified has necessitated the levying of a small fee, varying in accordance with the crop, to cover the expenditure involved.

Certified seed of all the crops under certification—perennial rye-grass, white clover, red clover, cocksfoot, brown-top, potatoes, beans, and wheat—commands a premium price, and both growers and buyers are keenly alive to the advantages of certification. It is interesting to note that so far as certified grass and clover seeds are concerned there is a growing inquiry from overseas, and it is hoped that within a very few years a lucrative export trade will be developed.