

POULTRY INDUSTRY.

Those interested in the welfare of the poultry industry have been giving serious consideration during the year to the question of better organization of the industry, in order that improvements might be effected in methods of marketing and to provide an equalization fund for export. This is a step in the right direction, as the want of organization in this industry has undoubtedly militated against it in the past, and, as advancement can only be brought about by increased export the creation of a fund to enable any loss to be equally met is necessary.

During last season 3,995 cases of eggs, each containing thirty dozen, were exported to London, and as these were without any Government guarantee any loss on export would fall entirely on those who participated in the export and who by this action helped to maintain local prices, thus assisting those who took no part in the export. The position would be quite all right if the export of eggs resulted in a profit to the exporter, but the last few years' experience has not indicated that export on a payable basis is very promising; the industry being such that during a few months of the year the eggs produced cannot be consumed, the disposal of this surplus and the maintaining of payable prices locally creates a difficulty. It is with the object of removing this inequitable position as well as strengthening the position of the industry generally that the organization of the poultry producers as mentioned aims.

Considerable interest has been evinced in the poultry industry, and the indications are that more people are giving attention to the production of eggs, both for their own use and for market, than formerly. The general depression has no doubt led to this, as the production of eggs is a means of relieving to some extent the difficulties facing many people. High prices of foodstuffs, however, have exercised a detrimental effect on increased production, and until production costs fall so as to allow eggs to be exported at a payable price, production beyond our own requirements is limited.

I append some extracts from the report of the Chief Poultry Instructor (Mr. F. C. Brown), as follows:—

As there has been no census of poultry taken since the year 1926, the question as to whether or not the flocks of the Dominion have increased or decreased cannot be gauged with any certainty. The fact, however, that the local market for eggs has been well met at a reasonable price to the consumer, and considering that 3,995 cases of eggs of thirty dozen each were exported to the London market during last spring, where none was exported during the previous year, indicates that the industry has at least held its own so far as numbers are concerned.

Regarding the eggs exported, when these were shipped the oversea market offered poor prospects of a payable price being returned. It is gratifying, however, to report that the prices realized were considered to be satisfactory, being equal to the ruling rate on the local market when the eggs were shipped, during the then flush season of the year.

With dear food and cheap eggs, poultry-keepers are now realizing probably more than ever before that if poultry is to prove a really payable proposition nothing but high-class laying types must be kept, and that drastic annual culling-out of low producers is imperative. This being so, the services of the Poultry Instructors to assist in the work of weeding out unprofitable stock, and in selecting the best specimens for breeding purposes, have been keenly sought, and with this work, together with delivering lectures, giving demonstrations, and grading eggs for export, &c., the Instructors have experienced a particularly busy time during the year.

Wallaceville Poultry Station: The value of this establishment as a demonstration and educational centre is evidenced by the increased number of poultry-keepers who have visited it during the year, and by the inquiries received by letter for advice regarding poultry-management in general. The practical investigational work which is being carried out at this station has been of great assistance in widening the knowledge possessed by the instructional staff, and this is being passed on to producers during visits to plants, by lectures, and through the medium of printed matter.

WOOL.

Little improvement has taken place in the market conditions in respect to wool, and the prospect before sheep-farmers is anything but bright. Work of an instructional nature has been continued and an endeavour made to encourage farmers to keep up improvement methods, which in times of falling markets become rather a difficult matter. It is, however, all the more necessary that we should not only maintain but improve our quality of wool in order that when the clouds lift we may be enabled to meet market requirements in respect to quality. I append hereto extracts from the report of Mr. J. G. Cook, Wool Instructor:—

Sheep throughout the Dominion commenced the winter of 1931 in good condition, but in some districts the winter was severe and was followed by very dry periods during the growing season. When shearing commenced it was apparent the the fleece wool was lacking in style, bloom, character, and growth, and that super wools would be in short supply.

A very large amount of our crossbred wool realized low prices, more especially the 46's count and under, no doubt due to the fact that these wools are not being used so extensively for making clothing as in past years, the wool having to be diverted to making other goods such as motor-car and furniture upholsteries, carpets, and floor-rugs, and also belting and other goods of similar nature, and it is these trades which are feeling very acutely the effects of the world's depression. Last year there was a better demand for coarser wools, and prices for 36's up to 48's quality were very close together, the coarser wool in some cases bringing higher prices than the finer wool. This year the finer wool again realized the higher prices.

During the month of November I was in the Auckland District, giving demonstrations in the shearing-sheds, and was afforded an opportunity of looking through some of the wool-stores before the first sale. There was a considerable amount of wool left over from the previous years, much of the fleece wool being discoloured owing to the wool having been shorn off the sheep while the wool was damp and pressed while in that condition; a very large amount of seedy wool, and also much wool grown on scrub-burnt country. The number of bales of pieces, stained pieces, belly-wool, locks, and crutchings was out of all proportion to the fleece wool present, indicating that the former class of wool had comprised a very large amount of the carrying-over from 1930-31. It would have been better in the interests of the owners of this wool, had it been sorted into its various qualities, and been scoured prior to being offered for sale.