

Thus 456 of a total 556 infant deaths in the first month of life occurred during the first week and may be regarded as mainly due to pre-natal influences. It is also of interest to record that 58 per cent. of the infant deaths (in the first twelve months of life) occurred in this first week—i.e., 456 in a total of 781.

SECTION 2.—NOTIFIABLE DISEASES.

Attached are four tables showing the notifications of infectious and other notifiable diseases in New Zealand for the year 1934. Tables A, B, and C, and, unless otherwise stated, the comments and tables given in this report, deal with Europeans only.

- Table A shows distribution by months.
- Table B shows distribution by health districts.
- Table C shows distribution by age and sex.
- Table D shows distribution of Maori cases by health districts.

GENERAL.

During the year 1934 there was a decrease of 597 in the number of notifications as compared with the previous year. The particular diseases which show a marked reduction on the previous year's figures are scarlet fever, diphtheria, enteric fever, tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, hydatids, lethargic encephalitis, bacillary dysentery. Increases were shown in the notifications for cerebro-spinal meningitis, influenza, erysipelas, puerperal fever, both following child-birth and abortions, tetanus, food-poisoning, and undulant fever.

Tables and comments regarding certain of the more common infectious diseases are given below :—

(a) *Scarlet Fever in New Zealand.*

Year.	Number of Notifications.	Deaths.		
		Number.	Rates per 10,000 of Mean Population.	Case-fatality Rate per Cent.
1928 .. ..	6,127	57	0·40	0·93
1929 .. ..	4,848	27	0·19	0·56
1930 .. ..	2,244	16	0·11	0·71
1931 .. ..	1,304	11	0·08	0·84
1932 .. ..	829	6	0·04	0·72
1933 .. ..	783	4	0·03	0·51
1934 .. ..	762	8	0·05	1·05

The year 1928 was the “peak” year of the epidemic which occurred during 1927–29. Since then the incidence of the disease has declined, the notifications last year numbering 762, the lowest figure recorded since 1910 (1,925 cases), when records were first kept for the calendar year instead of for the year ending 31st March.

The deaths, however, numbered 8 as compared with 4 the previous year, the case-fatality rate per cent. being 1·05 as against 0·51 in 1933.

(b) *Diphtheria.*

Year.	Number of Notifications.	Deaths.		
		Number.	Rates per 10,000 of Mean Population.	Case-fatality Rate per Cent.
1929 .. ..	1,687	92	0·65	5·45
1930 .. ..	1,440	58	0·41	4·03
1931 .. ..	1,327	55	0·38	4·14
1932 .. ..	802	40	0·27	4·99
1933 .. ..	963	27	0·18	2·80
1934 .. ..	436	26	0·18	5·96

As will be seen from the table, there was a remarkable drop in the number of notifications of this disease in 1934, from 963 in 1933 to 436 in 1934.

The last severe epidemic of diphtheria experienced in New Zealand was in 1917–19, the notification for these years being—1917, 5,458 cases; 1918, 5,539 cases; and 1919, 3,499 cases. Since that epidemic the incidence has been declining, the decline being interrupted at intervals by an increase. At the present time we are apparently experiencing the trough of an epidemic wane, and the low incidence which has been a feature of the past few years cannot be expected to continue indefinitely.

The number of deaths (26) was 1 less than in 1933, and was the lowest ever recorded for the Dominion. But whereas in 1933 there were 27 deaths to 963 notifications, in 1934 there were 26 deaths to 436 notifications. The case-fatality rate for last year is therefore more than double that of the previous year—5·96 per cent. as compared with 2·80 per cent., and is the highest experienced for many years.

(c) *Typhoid Fever.*

This disease, once one of the principal causes of death, has dropped from a high position to a very lowly one. There were only 51 cases amongst the European population during the year, with 1 death. The death-rate per 10,000 of mean population (0·01) was over one hundred times less than the average rate for the several years prior to 1900, and over two hundred times less than in the “eighties.”

As will be seen from Table D, there were more Maori cases than European ones—89 as against 51—and the deaths of Maoris numbered 10 as against 1 European.