

LIVE-STOCK DIVISION.

REPORT OF W. C. BARRY, M.R.C.V.S., DIRECTOR.

The year just closed has been a particularly arduous one for this Division of the Department, attributable largely to the increasing animal population of the Dominion, the rapid expansion of the swine industry, and the more intensive efforts for the suppression of ragwort. Thus, obviously, officers have had their activities increased in the field, laboratory, meat-export works, and at headquarters.

The satisfactory position as regards animal-diseases is being maintained, and the Dominion is still free from the more serious diseases. It is recognized, however, that the present ailments of stock, particularly of dairy cattle, call for still more intensive investigation, and the intention is to increase the staff of veterinary research officers as soon as suitable officers can be secured.

HEALTH OF LIVE-STOCK.

HORSES.

The position in regard to the contagious diseases of horses is a very satisfactory one. With the exception of the occurrence of some cases of strangles, no contagious disease of horses is reported. About forty horses were affected with this disease in one outbreak, but no deaths occurred.

The breeding of draught horses, mainly of the Clydesdale breed, continues to be a feature of farm-stock production in the South Island, principally in the Otago, Southland, and Canterbury districts. The introduction of a number of stallions of the desired type has stimulated the breeding of this class of horse in some of the North Island districts. It is a fact, however, that a tendency to discard teams and replace them with tractors may give breeders a setback in that the prospective demand may not be sustained. Good prices have been obtained for draught horses throughout the year, the export of breeding stock to Australia being of considerable importance to the Dominion.

The breeding of horses suitable for remount purposes is much neglected. Of the lighter class of horses the presence of hunt clubs in several districts tends to encourage the breeding of hunters and hacks. Some encouragement would appear to be necessary before any marked improvement in the breeding of horses suitable for remount purposes can be expected.

CATTLE.

Tuberculosis.—In the administration of the Stock Act, 7,706 cattle were condemned on clinical grounds or as a result of the application of the tuberculin test, compensation being paid in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The total number of cattle, exclusive of calves, examined at the various abattoirs and meat-export slaughter-houses was 417,706, a decrease of 61,257 on last year's figures. Of these, 28,427, or 6.805 per cent., were found to be affected with tuberculosis in varying degrees, a large percentage being only slightly affected. During the year the tuberculin test was applied to 20,577 cattle, of which number 970 reacted, 4.7 per cent.

Actinomycosis.—The number of animals condemned for this disease and for which compensation was paid totalled 972. The Department continues to supply, through its various offices, the farming community with potassium-iodide tablets for the treatment and cure of suitable cases, and many cured animals continue to produce.

Malignant Growths.—The number of animals condemned and for which compensation was paid was 427.

Blackleg.—The position in regard to the control of this disease remains satisfactory. A small increase in the number of outbreaks occurred in the Auckland district, but the disease did not appear in new territory. The total number of calves vaccinated in the blackleg areas of Taranaki and Auckland during the year was 28,969. This figure shows a considerable increase in the vaccinations as compared with last year's figures, the increase taking place in both districts. The increase in the period following vaccination, when calves may be removed from an affected area, is much appreciated by the farming community and by the officers carrying out this work.

Anthrax.—The freedom of the Dominion from this disease is pleasing to record.

John's Disease.—The evidence accumulated throughout the year shows that this chronic disease of cattle is being reported on several fresh farms from time to time. In the Waikato the disease was confirmed on seven fresh farms during the year, and in Taranaki the disease was shown to exist on ten further farms. Although on many of these farms the actual number of cattle affected with the disease is small the increase in the number of farms affected, together with the difficulty of knowing the exact extent of the disease in any one district, makes the problem of control of the disease a serious matter. The chronic nature of the disease, with the long period of incubation before clinical symptoms are shown, is a feature of the disease which handicaps the most enthusiastic worker in any survey as to the exact incidence in any district.

In the control of the disease the Johnin test is being availed of by veterinarians in the Taranaki and Waikato districts. In the Waikato district this work is being carried out by Mr. Marshall, assisted by Mr. McDonald. In the Taranaki district Mr. Stephens, Stratford, carried out the intradermal Johnin-testing. The South Taranaki district work in connection with Johnin-testing is now being carried out by Mr. Alexander, Hawera. The slow and exacting nature of this work being carried out and recorded reflects credit on the officers concerned.