

Poliomyelitis.—The number of cases of poliomyelitis reported for the year was 765; of these, 557 were paralytic and 208 non-paralytic. Forty-three deaths occurred—39 Europeans and 4 Maoris. A full account of the epidemic which began in December, 1936, at Dunedin appears as an appendix to this report.

The measures taken by the Department to deal with the outbreak were outlined in last year's report.

Lethargic Encephalitis and Cerebro-spinal Meningitis.—Three cases of the former disease (7 in 1936) and 13 of the latter (12 in 1936) were reported.

Puerperal Sepsis.—Sepsis following childbirth was responsible for 6 deaths in 1937, as compared with 9 in 1936. Sepsis following abortion, on the other hand, accounted for 23 deaths in 1937, as against 14 in 1936.

Whooping-cough and Measles.—The total deaths from whooping-cough numbered 13 (47 in 1936), while 4 deaths were recorded for measles. The continued low level of measles for several years means an ever-increasing number of susceptibles with the risk of a wide-spread epidemic. It occasioned no surprise then that measles reported first in North Auckland towards the end of 1937 has since spread to other parts of New Zealand in epidemic form. An account of this outbreak will be given in next year's report. At present it need only be said that the disease was relatively severe with numerous fatalities (47 in North Auckland Health District with a total population of 66,000) and with encephalitis as an occasional complication. The disease, as usual, proved more fatal among Maoris than among Europeans.

Tuberculosis.—There were 589 deaths from tuberculosis (all forms), as compared with 680 in 1936. The death-rate per 10,000 for the past five years is shown in the following table—

Year.					Respiratory Tuberculosis.	Non-respiratory Tuberculosis.	Tuberculosis, all Forms.
1933	..	..	..	..	3.25	0.92	4.17
1934	..	..	..	..	3.33	0.88	4.21
1935	..	..	..	..	3.18	0.71	3.89
1936	..	..	..	..	3.62	0.94	4.56
1937	..	..	..	..	3.28	0.63	3.91

The figures for respiratory tuberculosis are the third lowest recorded in New Zealand; for non-respiratory, the lowest; and for all forms the second lowest. It is satisfactory to note the decline in the rate for all forms in 1937. In last year's report an account was given of measures being taken against this disease.

Silicosis.—The Department was represented on the Inter-Departmental Committee which investigated the question of silicosis in New Zealand. The report of the Committee has been issued by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research as Bulletin No. 57.

The Tuberculosis Research Committee of the newly constituted Medical Research Council has been asked to investigate the question of silicosis in its association with tuberculosis.

Hydatid Disease.—During the year the Dogs Registration Act, 1908, was amended to make it compulsory for all dog-owners to purchase an approved remedy for tapeworm in dogs before registration is granted. The amendment comes into force on the 1st January, 1939. Under this legislation local authorities which deal with the registration of dogs are charged with the duty of keeping supplies of the approved remedy. Printed instructions regarding the administration of the remedy and the methods of prevention of hydatid disease will also be issued along with the approved remedy.

These increased powers will be most helpful, but their full effect can only be achieved with the intelligent co-operation of the farming community.

Cancer.—The New Zealand Branch of the British Empire Cancer Campaign Society continues to afford the Department willing co-operation and expert guidance.

The Commonwealth Government of Australia has accepted an invitation to hold its annual Cancer Conference in New Zealand in 1939, and has suggested that in future the conference should be known as the Australian and New Zealand Cancer Conference. This further evidence of co-operation between the Commonwealth of Australia and New Zealand in this connection is most gratifying.

Venereal Diseases.—As pointed out in last year's report, these diseases show no signs of increasing. This is brought out by the tables summarizing the returns of treatment of venereal diseases in the four main centres and appearing later in this report.

REPORTS OF DIVISIONAL DIRECTORS.

Public Hygiene.—Dr. Ritchie, in his report, gives fuller statistical information for the year. The usual action was taken for safeguarding water-supplies and for promoting modern methods of sewage disposal and treatment. Many other matters, such as the supervision of swimming-baths, camping-grounds, and milk schemes, control over industrial and trade wastes, also received attention. The measures to deal with the epidemic of poliomyelitis, of course, entailed much additional administrative work.