

In a case where a very large number of rabbit-skins had been stolen by night from a warehouse, considerable assistance was rendered to the police by the identification as rabbit-fur of a number of fibres obtained from the clothing of a suspect and from a car which it was proved had been hired by the suspect on the night of the crime. The nature of the fibres was proved conclusively by microscopic examination, especially of the transverse sections, which are very characteristic.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

Milk.—A total of 9,416 samples of milk were examined at the main Laboratory and the three branches.

Wellington: Of 1,685 samples taken in Wellington City and suburbs, 8 were deficient in fat, 17 contained added water, and 24 were stale. This record, while satisfactory, is not up to the standard of the previous year, there being an increased number of samples reported as containing water and as stale.

From the country districts, which include Nelson, Marlborough, Wellington Province (except Wellington City and suburbs), Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, and Gisborne 700 samples were examined. Of these, 14 were low in fat and 6 contained added water.

During the year the school milk scheme was introduced and samples were regularly examined at Wellington, as well as the other centres, by the usual methods.

As the Department of Health requires such milk to be pasteurized, the samples were in addition examined for effective pasteurization by the phosphatase test.

The milks examined proved to be of satisfactory quality.

Auckland: For Auckland a total of 3,683 samples was analysed, representing a large increase on the 2,556 examined during the previous year. Of 3,179 samples taken in Auckland City and suburbs, 23 were below the standard for fat, 25 contained added water, and 27 were stale.

Of 1,127 samples obtained from other towns in the Auckland Province, 11 was below the standard for fat, 19 contained added water, and 7 were stale.

As in the other districts a considerable number of samples were examined in connection with the supply of milk to schools.

Christchurch: The number of milk-samples examined during the year was 2,210, of which 1,432 were from Christchurch City and suburbs, the remainder being from the provincial districts of Canterbury and Westland.

Christchurch City and Suburbs: The percentage of non-compliances for 1937 was 5.9, a slight increase on the previous year (4.3). Of these non-compliances, however, approximately half were very small deficiencies in fat or solids other than fat; if these are excluded the percentage of other non-compliances is only 3.1.

With reference to the reductase test, the legal minimum test is three hours, but the percentage of samples reducing in five hours or under was only 3.4, being the same percentage as for 1936.

Outside Districts: The number of samples examined was 778, of which 478 were from Canterbury and 300 from the West Coast districts.

By a combination of unofficial and official sampling the reductase test was extended to cover the milk-suppliers of all the larger towns of Canterbury and Westland. The unofficial samples were forwarded to Christchurch for examination, being transported in specially designed ice-boxes and tested immediately after receipt. In most cases the milk-supplies of the various towns were found to be satisfactory.

School Milk-supply: The supply has all been obtained from the only pasteurization plant in Christchurch large enough to cope with the demand. The laboratory has been called upon to control the quality of the milk both before and after pasteurization, and visits have also been made to the pasteurization plant. The number of samples examined was 669, of which 298 were producers' milk before pasteurization and 371 as delivered to the schools. In cases where producers' milk has been unsatisfactory, appropriate action has been taken to effect a remedy. At the inauguration of the scheme a few irregularities were noted in the milk as finally supplied to the schools, but these have been eliminated, and the supply has, on the whole, been very satisfactory. As in the other centres, pasteurization tests have been made by the phosphatase method. The scheme is gradually being extended to cover the province, and additional supplies are also under observation. In a number of cases farm water-supplies have been examined.

Dunedin: Of 610 samples examined, as against 445 for the previous year, 13 were deficient in fat, 6 contained added water, and 7 were stale. Although there is an increase in the number of samples taken, it could with advantage be increased further to at least 1,500 per annum.

From the other towns in the Otago and Southland Health Districts 528 samples were obtained. Of these, 16 were deficient in fat, 3 contained added water, and 3 were stale.

In addition, 208 samples from the Waipiata Sanatorium were examined. They were of satisfactory quality.

Reductase Test.—During the year further work, particularly in Auckland and Dunedin, has been carried out on the reductase test as modified by the Ministry of Health, Great Britain. The modified test has been found to have distinct advantages and will be substituted for the present test in the regulations under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act.

The use of the phosphatase test for pasteurization of milk has been continued in the main laboratory and the three branches, and its great value definitely established.

On the whole, the condition of the domestic milk-supplies of the Dominion can be regarded as very satisfactory.

It has been observed, however, that in some cases, pasteurized milk is not labelled as required by regulation, and customers are supplied with raw or pasteurized milk indiscriminately.

The use of the phosphatase test provides a means of checking this practice.