

Measures to improve the quality of the nation's milk supply.

Contributors

Great Britain.

Publication/Creation

London : H.M.S.O., 1943.

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MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE NATION'S MILK SUPPLY

*Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty
July, 1943*

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LONDON

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1943

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Cmd. 6454

MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE NATION'S MILK SUPPLY

1. In their Memorandum on Milk Policy issued in May, 1942 (Cmd. 6362), the Government referred to action which had already been taken in pursuance of their policy of maintaining and if possible increasing the production, and stimulating the consumption, of milk, and outlined further measures relating to marketing and retail distribution. Notwithstanding the many war-time difficulties with which milk producers have to contend, the production of milk has been well maintained. The consumption of milk in its liquid form, particularly by those who need it most, namely children and mothers, has greatly increased.

2. In further development of this policy the Government have had under review all measures relating to the quality of the milk supply.

3. The basis of a sound milk policy, whether from the point of view of the economics of production or the quality of the product, is a well-bred, healthy, dairy herd.

4. The first essential towards the attainment of this objective is a sound breeding policy. In the production of high-class pedigree breeding stock this country leads the world, but the type of animal in the majority of the commercial dairy herds leaves much to be desired. Substantial improvement in the type of bull used has been effected by the licensing of bulls but this has been to some extent offset by an increasing tendency in the direction of indiscriminate cross-breeding. For this reason the Government attach great importance to the grading up of the national dairy herd by the adoption by owners of dairy cattle, even when they do not rear their own stock, of a policy which will result in progressive improvement. County War Agricultural Executive Committees are already giving farmers guidance and, where necessary, directions, as to the rearing and use of better bulls, the culling of unthrifty or diseased cows, and the general development of a more enlightened breeding policy. Further proposals to this end are being explored.

5. A long-term programme for a general grading up of the national dairy herd with a view to increasing milk yields and improving the stamina of the animals will itself result in an improvement in the quality of the milk produced since the type of animal which is most susceptible to disease will be gradually eliminated.

England and Wales

6. The following paragraphs apply in the main to England and Wales. For modifications in their application to Scotland and Northern Ireland see paras. 35-37 and paras. 38-39 respectively.

7. The Government have also had under consideration the arrangements for veterinary inspection of dairy herds. The present position is as follows:—

(a) Herds producing Tuberculin Tested milk in accordance with the Milk (Special Designations) Regulations are subjected to a periodical test for tuberculosis, and animals reacting to the test must immediately be removed. These herds must also undergo a general veterinary inspection twice a year, and animals showing any signs of disease which may affect the milk injuriously must immediately be segregated from the rest of the herd, or removed, as the case may require.*

(b) Herds producing Accredited* milk in accordance with the same Regulations are subject to a similar veterinary inspection once every three months, but do not have to undergo a test for tuberculosis.

(c) Owing to the shortage of veterinary staff a very considerable number of herds whose milk does not qualify for any special designation are not inspected at all.

* For further details see Appendix.

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8. It is, in the Government's view, obviously desirable that every herd in the country should be inspected by a veterinary officer at least once a year. There is, however, no likelihood for some time to come that it will prove possible to undertake the additional inspections involved whilst maintaining the existing frequency of inspections in the case of all the herds at present inspected. The Government propose accordingly to introduce a more satisfactory and rational system of inspection covering all the herds of the country.

9. Tuberculin Tested herds will continue to be inspected once in every six months, as at present.

Accredited herds will be inspected at least once a year where the milk from the herd is subject to adequate heat treatment† before sale to the consumer; where the milk is not so treated the herd will continue to be inspected once every three months, unless the herd is Attested, in which case it will be inspected once in every six months.

All other herds will be inspected once a year where the milk is heat treated; and, as a first step, within the limits of the staff available, twice a year where the milk is not heat treated, with additional inspections of those herds with a bad disease history.

10. It is estimated that the fulfilment of this programme will involve about 30,000 additional inspections for the country as a whole. It will provide for the first time a uniform basis of inspection of dairy herds throughout the country and bring the State veterinary officers into regular contact with those farmers (owning "non-designated" herds) who most need their advice.

11. At the same time the scheme for the control of diseases of dairy cattle recently introduced under the auspices of the National Farmers' Union and the National Veterinary Medical Association, with the approval of and some financial assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture, will be continued, and every effort will be made, particularly by inspectors carrying out routine inspections, to encourage an extension of this scheme within the limits imposed by the availability of veterinary practitioners in any particular district. The scheme provides that for a fixed fee the veterinary practitioner undertakes the regular examination and treatment of the animals in the herd for certain of the major diseases of dairy cattle, and the farmer on his part undertakes to co-operate actively in the necessary control measures.

12. The Attested Herds Scheme* has been for the past ten years a feature of Government policy. A valuable reservoir of tubercle-free cattle has been provided by the very considerable number of herds within the scheme. Since the outbreak of war new entries into the scheme have been confined to T.T. herds.

13. The above proposals deal with the health of the animals. The next stage in the production of good quality milk is attention to methods, buildings and equipment. Although responsibility for matters concerning the health of the animals was transferred to the Minister of Agriculture in 1938, responsibility for the conditions under which milk is produced still remains with sanitary authorities and also in the case of T.T. and Accredited milk producers with County Councils. The standard of administration varies widely throughout the country, but while appreciating difficulties which some of them experience under present circumstances the Government after very careful consideration have reached the conclusion that no substantial general improvement can be anticipated so long as the existing system with its multiplicity of responsible authorities is maintained; transfer of the existing powers of local authorities to a central authority offers the only satisfactory solution of the problem.

14. It is therefore the intention of the Government to submit to Parliament, after consultation with the Local Authorities concerned as to the arrange-

* For further details see Appendix.

† See paragraph 26.

ments that will have to be made, legislation providing for the transfer to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, as soon as conditions permit, of the functions of local authorities relating to the conditions under which milk, including designated milks, is produced on the farm. The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries will thus become responsible for all matters relating to the production of milk.

15. The veterinary staff of the Department who will in any case be visiting the farm at regular intervals to inspect the animals will then also be responsible for the supervision of the conditions under which the milk is produced. Under central control it will be possible to bring about greater uniformity of standard and a continuous improvement in that standard. Co-ordination with the other work in connection with milk production on which the Ministry is already engaged will also be greatly facilitated.

16. The Milk Testing and Advisory Scheme referred to in paragraph 6 (c) of the White Paper of May, 1942 (Cmd. 6362), is being extended, with the full co-operation of the Milk Marketing Board and the Milk Distributive Trade, as rapidly as conditions permit. Already arrangements have been made for the regular testing of milk going to all the larger depots. The Scheme provides a means of detecting milk of poor keeping quality, a condition which may be due to faults in methods of production on the farm, and constitutes a substantial advance in the direction of ensuring an adequate supply of clean milk. Where there is reason to suppose that the methods of production are at fault, the advisory services of the County War Agricultural Executive Committee are available to remedy matters. This work can be closely co-ordinated with that of the veterinary staff.

17. The Government consider that further encouragement should be given to the production and consumption of milk free from tubercle infection. The present arrangements regarding the sale of T.T. milk are designed to encourage production of this valuable type of milk, but they do not encourage its purchase as such by the consumer. The producer of T.T. milk receives a premium of 2½d. per gallon for producing it whether it is sold as T.T. milk or not. If it is sold to the public as such the producer receives a further premium of not less than 2d. per gallon from the distributor who has purchased that producer's milk from the Ministry of Food. Moreover, the distributor himself normally requires a higher margin for handling T.T. milk owing to the greater care and work involved. The opportunities of developing the sale of T.T. milk as such, in competition with other varieties of milk have therefore been restricted.

18. Consequently much of the T.T. milk produced is not sold as such but is bulked with ordinary milk and sold as ordinary milk. This is discouraging to the producer, it involves a serious waste of effort, and the consumer is deprived of the advantages of this special type of milk.

19. The Government propose to change the basis of remuneration for the production and sale of T.T. milk. The premium paid direct to the T.T. producer for producing the milk will be raised to 4d. per gallon, premiums paid to producers by distributors for supplying milk of T.T. standard will be discontinued, and the Ministry of Food will take over from the producer the responsibility for finding a market for his product.

20. It is further proposed that T.T. milk shall be sold to the public at a price only slightly in excess of the price for ordinary milk (whether raw or heat treated). A maximum price for T.T. milk will be prescribed at a level sufficient to cover the cost of the increase in premiums to be paid to producers and the costs of distribution. Distributors will be allowed a reasonable margin, based upon a costings investigation, for handling T.T. milk.

21. It will still not be possible, in view of transport difficulties, to ensure that all T.T. milk is sold to the consumer as such but it will be the policy of

the Ministry of Food to take all practicable steps to that end. They will not, however, be able in all cases to guarantee supplies of T.T. milk to every consumer desiring it as production is limited and distribution under war-time conditions from distant supplying areas is difficult and expensive of transport.

22. The Government consider that the measures indicated in paragraphs 19 and 20 will accelerate the already very encouraging increase in the production of T.T. milk which has taken place in recent years.

23. The policy outlined above aims at the grading up of the national dairy herd by encouraging the adoption by dairy farmers of a sound breeding policy; a continuous improvement in the health of all dairy herds encouraged by regular inspection by state veterinary officers, supplemented by an expansion of the scheme for the control of diseases of dairy cattle and its educational effect in convincing farmers generally of the value of disease control; an improvement in the conditions under which milk is produced on farms, brought about by central control and closer co-ordination with other activities relating to the economic aspect of milk production; and an increase in the production of T.T. milk and its consumption as such.

24. Responsibility for the enforcement of the existing Statutory provisions relating to the protection of milk against infection and contamination in milk depots and retail premises and during transport and distribution will remain with local authorities. Under the Milk and Dairies Order, 1926, dairy premises from which milk is supplied on or for sale and persons carrying on the trade of dairying are required to be registered with the local authority of the district. The Order also contains detailed provisions relating, *inter alia*, to the structure of premises, the cleanliness of milk vessels and utensils, the cleanliness of methods and of persons engaged in the handling of milk and the prohibition of the sale of milk likely to cause infectious disease.

25. As explained in the Memorandum on Milk Policy (Cmd. 6362) the Minister of Food has introduced, as a war time measure, schemes for the rationalisation of retail distribution, with the object of achieving maximum economies in transport and manpower. These schemes normally take the form of restricting the milk deliveries of each dairyman to an area immediately surrounding his dairy or the points from which he operates. Consequently, where deliveries in a street are now limited to one or two dairymen many customers now receive their milk from suppliers whom they did not themselves select. These suppliers, in many cases, do not provide the type or kind of milk which the consumer previously purchased. For instance, a consumer who previously purchased pasteurised milk may now be receiving raw untreated milk, while another consumer who previously insisted upon T.T. milk may now be supplied with pasteurised milk. It has thus been necessary in the national interests to deprive consumers in certain areas of freedom to choose their supplier, and this places upon the Government the obligation to ensure, as soon as possible, that all milk supplied to consumers in those areas should conform to the higher standards of purity which have previously been demanded.

26. The Government accordingly propose to take power to exercise closer control over the quality of milk as it reaches the consumer. The Minister of Food will be empowered by Regulation to make it an offence to sell milk by retail in any area which he may schedule unless either—

- (i) it is heat treated as defined by Order; or
- (ii) it is lawfully sold as T.T. milk; or
- (iii) it is Accredited milk sold by a retailer (whether producer-retailer or dairyman) who sells the milk of a single Accredited Herd.

Milk will be regarded as heat treated if it satisfies the phosphatase test for adequate heat treatment, supplemented by a methylene blue test for keeping quality, as prescribed by the Minister of Health.

27. Before any area is scheduled the Minister of Food will satisfy himself that adequate plant is available for heat treating the whole of the milk sold in the area, except as provided in paragraph 26. It is the Government's aim to apply these measures of control to all areas where schemes for the rationalisation of retail distribution are introduced as rapidly as the necessary plant can be made available.

28. In all areas of population exceeding 10,000 there is a War Time Association constituted by local suppliers of milk (dairymen and producer-retailers). The Executive Committees of these bodies normally contain at least one Co-operative representative, one large dairyman, one small dairyman and one producer-retailer. These Associations have been requested to prepare plans for the rationalisation of retail distribution. It is proposed to invite the Associations also to submit plans for organising in their districts the heat treatment of milk.

29. Consideration has been given to the question of providing independent pasteurising plant to handle the milk of small producers. Where it proves impossible for satisfactory arrangements to be made by the trade itself to safeguard the interests of small producer-retailers and dairymen in arranging for the heat treatment of their milk, Local Authorities will be enabled, by appropriate directions under Defence Regulation 54B, to instal and operate pasteurising plant. They would be treated as wholesalers for the purpose and therefore entitled to the margin allowed for performing the wholesale function, including heat treatment.

30. It is possible that some dairymen receiving milk direct from farms and some producer-retailers might incur extra transport in taking their milk to a processing station, and bringing milk away again for retail delivery, as compared with the transport incurred in their present distribution. In such cases the Ministry of Food will be prepared to consider an application for an additional allowance in respect of extra costs incurred.

31. The small dairyman or producer-retailer will not as the result of the arrangements for the heat treatment of milk run the risk of losing customers to a larger organisation, as all customers are registered with particular suppliers and no change is possible without Ministry of Food approval.

32. There will be no added cost to the producer-retailer in submitting his milk to heat treatment, where it is necessary. He will be able to sell his milk to the Milk Marketing Board at the contract price and buy heat-treated milk at the price at which the Ministry of Food sells to any dairyman. He will thus receive the full remuneration guaranteed by the Government to all milk producers and the full retail margin allowed to all retailers.

33. Apart from the alteration in the frequency of inspections of Accredited herds as described in paragraph 9 above the present proposals do not involve any change in the present Milk (Special Designations) Regulations, until such time as it becomes necessary to provide for the transfer of functions proposed in paragraphs 13 and 14. Milk will continue to be sold as "Pasteurised", "Tuberculin Tested" and "Accredited" in so far as it conforms to the requirements of the Regulations. "Pasteurisation" is a form of heat treatment and pasteurised milk would comply with the proposed requirements. Those who desire to retain the pasteurisation process and sell "Pasteurised" milk will be able to do so, provided they comply with the full requirements of the Milk (Special Designations) Regulations. "Sterilisation" is also a form of heat treatment which would conform to the proposed requirements. Consequently the sale of "Sterilised Milk" could be continued by those desiring to market it.

34. The Government attach the highest importance to the quality of milk supplied under the Milk in Schools Scheme. It is therefore proposed to carry out a census of all schools with the object of determining the type of milk at present consumed. In the light of this census every effort will be made in consultation with the local Medical Officers of Health to provide heat treated milk, or T.T. milk where neither of these types of milk is now supplied.

Scotland

35. The general standard of milk production in Scotland, although no doubt susceptible of improvement, is not unsatisfactory. The amount of certified and T.T. milk produced is approximately one third of the total production of milk in Scotland, compared with some 6 per cent. in England and Wales. Different nomenclature is used in Scotland for other grades than T.T. In addition the general price structure in operation is different, and the arrangements for milk inspection in Scotland are effectively operated by the Department of Health for Scotland and the local authorities. It is already a statutory requirement that registered dairy herds must be inspected once each year.

36. For these reasons the application of the policy outlined above will in certain respects require adjustment for Scotland. It is proposed to apply to Scotland arrangements comparable to those set out in paras. 19 and 20 for increasing the premium to T.T. producers, and for requiring the heat treatment of milk, with prescribed exceptions, in centres where the necessary facilities can be provided.

37. It is not, however, considered necessary to transfer from the local authorities to a central authority their functions in regard to the inspection of dairy premises. In Scotland, the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1929, transferred to the major health authorities (County Councils and large burghs, 55 in number) all powers and duties under milk legislation and accordingly these are not, as in England, dispersed among a multiplicity of minor authorities. In general, a reasonably good standard of administration is maintained. From the experience of recent years, especially in all the main milk producing areas, it seems clear that whatever measure of uniformity is necessary can be achieved by local authorities with the help and advice of the Departments of Health and Agriculture for Scotland. Since 1938 the Department of Health for Scotland have maintained a staff of milk inspectors for the purpose of stimulating and advising local authorities in the exercise of their functions under the Milk Acts and Orders and achieving the greatest possible degree of uniformity of standards. So far as Scotland is concerned, therefore, it is proposed that the present legislative arrangements should remain undisturbed.

Northern Ireland

38. Under the Milk and Milk Products Act (Northern Ireland) 1934, all milk must be sold according to quality grades. These are Grade A, *i.e.* milk produced from Tuberculin Tested cows and bottled on the farm; Grade B, which is, broadly, similar to Accredited milk in Great Britain and may be bottled either by the producer or distributor; Grade C, for which bottling is not compulsory; and Grade D, which may not be sold for liquid consumption. All persons selling Grade A, Grade B or Grade C milk require to hold a licence from the Ministry of Agriculture, and the herds of all licensed producers are inspected at least twice yearly by veterinary officers of the Ministry. Certain standards in regard to premises and equipment for the production and sale of milk, whether by producers or distributors, are also laid down by regulations under the Act. In addition, sampling of milk for cleanliness and bacteriological count is carried out periodically by officers of the Ministry.

39. In view of the difference in conditions regarding the grading of milk in Northern Ireland and the methods of licensing and inspection both of dairy cows and of dairy premises, certain adjustments will be required in the application to Northern Ireland of the policy outlined in the preceding paragraphs. Arrangements have already been made for increasing the premium on the production of Grade A milk while maintaining a reasonable price level for such milk when sold to consumers. It is also proposed to require the heat treatment of milk, with prescribed exceptions, in centres where the necessary facilities can be provided. In addition, steps will be introduced designed to ensure that the standard of inspection in regard to dairy cows and dairy premises are as high as those which will apply in England and Wales under the proposals outlined. Central responsibility for the inspection of both cows and cowsheds already exists under the Ministry of Agriculture in connection with the production and sale of Grade A, B and C milk, and it is proposed to extend this responsibility to cover all milk produced and the premises on which it is produced.

40. The policy of the Government outlined in this Memorandum can be summarised as follows: All possible steps will be taken to improve the quality of milk as it leaves the farm. To this end the health of the animals in all dairy herds will be brought under State supervision, special attention being paid to those herds the milk from which is not heat treated before sale to the consumer; the production and consumption of T.T. milk will be further encouraged. Concurrently with these measures, arrangements will be made to subject to heat treatment as high a proportion of milk, other than T.T. and some Accredited milk, as is practicable. Every effort will be made to provide all schools with heat-treated milk. ~~T.T. milk or milk exclusively from single Accredited herds.~~

APPENDIX.

Tuberculin Tested Milk.

Tuberculin Tested milk producers have to obtain a licence from the appropriate Licensing Authority (*i.e.* County Borough or County Council). A producer must satisfy the Licensing Authority—

- (a) by the production of a certificate that every animal in his herd has undergone the tuberculin test;
- (b) that any animal certified as reacting to the tuberculin test has been removed from the herd; subsequent tests are normally at six monthly intervals;
- (c) by the production of a Veterinary Surgeon's certificate as to the general health of his herd;
- (d) as to his arrangements for producing milk, including the structure and cleanliness of buildings, cleanliness of milking arrangements and sterilisation of utensils; and
- (e) as to the cleanliness of his milk as judged by the results of laboratory tests.

Accredited Milk.

To become an Accredited milk producer a dairy farmer must obtain a licence from the appropriate Licensing Authority (*i.e.* County Borough or County Council). He must satisfy the Licensing Authority—

- (a) by production of a Veterinary Surgeon's certificate as to the general health of his milch cows;
- (b) as to his arrangements for producing milk, including the structure and cleanliness of buildings, cleanliness of milking arrangements and sterilisation of utensils; and
- (c) as to the cleanliness of his milk as judged by the results of laboratory tests.

Attested Herds.

Certificates of attestation of herds officially certified free from Tuberculosis are issued by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. In order to qualify for a certificate the following conditions have to be fulfilled:—

- (a) the herd must pass two tuberculin tests at an interval of not less than 60 days and not more than 12 months, without reactors being found;
- (b) all the animals in the herd must subsequently pass an official tuberculin test made by a Veterinary Inspector of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries; subsequent tests are carried out at intervals ranging from 60 days following the disclosure of reactors up to 12 months if no reactors have been found; and
- (c) the management of the herd and the conditions in which it is kept must be suitable for the observance of the Rules of the Attested Herds Scheme.