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I. INTRODUCTION

The problem of infertility is of paramount importance to the dairy industry of any country, and although this fact has been realised for many years in temperate climates where a great deal of research has been carried out, there is still not sufficient knowledge of the subject to allow an assessment of the relative importance of the various factors known to affect fertility. Nutrition, disease and genetic factors are perhaps the most important and indeed have been shown (1) to be interrelated.

It is well known that nutrition plays a great part in affecting fertility, but most of the information available in the literature is either of a general nature or is extremely detailed and founded on experimental work the results of which have little significance under practical conditions. It is the opinion of many workers that nutrition has an important bearing on fertility but few of them have been able to present evidence to support this view. Hignett (1) has emphasised the intricacy of the problem - "It seems possible that we have touched the perimeter of a complex involving vitamin D, calcium, phosphorus, potaassium, iodine and some other trace elements."

It is only in recent years that infertility has been studied on a herd basis whereas previously it was regarded as a problem of the individual. It is believed that the problem must be attacked on a herd basis in order that proper preventive measures can be undertaken.

In Trinidad, some limited work has been carried out on infertility in dairy cattle. Richards (2) studied the breeding activities of several cows in one herd and concluded that irregular breeding was due chiefly to functional sterility caused by lack of, or improper

function of the ovaries. He suggested that this form of sterility is important in contributing to the irregularities of reproduction in dairy cows in Trinidad. An analysis of the breeding records of the Government Stock Farm dairy herd at St. Joseph was made by McBurney (3) who found that the general fertility level was low and also concluded that dairy cattle in the rest of the island exhibit an equal degree of infertility. Neither of these reports however, indicates the extent to which nutrition is the cause of the infertility.

A similar survey of the occurrence of infertility in dairy cattle and goats is being carried out by Mr. J.A.C. Davies who is studying the problem from the veterinary aspect. Disease and nutrition are not unrelated in their effects on fertility (1,4,5,6,7), and it is hoped that the results from both surveys can be correlated.