

immersion in hot water or passing through a steam tunnel.

Disinfectants said to be the most effective are those containing chlorine and some of the new quaternary ammonium compounds. Directions for use are to be found on the containers in which the disinfectants are packed.

It is not necessary to rinse the boxes after treatment with chlorine disinfectants, as the chlorine will be dissipated fairly quickly after exposure to air, but rinsing is necessary when quaternary ammonium compounds are used.

A recent English report discusses some work undertaken to test the efficacy of certain "sanitisers". These included hypochlorite-containing substances, a formaldehyde-containing substance, quaternary ammonium compounds, non-ionic detergent and detergent/disinfectant mixtures. The results indicated that the detergents used were not of great effect, nor was formaldehyde. Hypochlorite solutions containing not less than 1,000 parts per million of free chlorine, or quaternary ammonium compounds in appropriate concentrations, could effect a reduction in bacteria counts of from 90 to 99 per cent, particularly if the boxes were scrubbed as well. On old boxes, particularly those made of softwood, which is highly porous, this could not however be regarded as really satisfactory, because the residual bacteria tended to breed again. Even a 99.9% reduction in the bacteria present would still leave a residue of around a million bacteria per square inch of box!

Inspectors who have the opportunity are asked to examine the methods used by markets and co-operatives in the treatment of fish boxes, and to report to Head Office whether steps are taken to clean boxes before returning to owners, and, if so, what methods and disinfectants are used.

AUSTRALIAN WHALING

During the 1955 whaling season Australian shore-based stations caught 1,840 humpback whales and the value of production was approximately £A1,953,000 - or £1,060 per whale. This compares with last season's catch of 2,040

whales and production worth approximately £1.7 million, or £860 per whale. Most stations completed their quotas in a much shorter period than in 1954, and with prices for whale oil and the by-products of whale meal and solubles a little higher than the previous year, another satisfactory season was experienced.

Whaling stations on the west coast of Australia had their quotas reduced from 1,320 to 1,120 hump-back whales in order to conserve whale stocks which, according to some, had shown signs of depletion. Whilst this represents a substantial reduction, it allowed greater selectivity in the size of whales taken. The shorter season undoubtedly permitted more economic operation of processing factories at Point Cloates, Babbage Island and Albany. A rise in the price of oil to £80 - £85 stg. per ton (c.i.f. continental ports) also assisted the value of production.

With the smaller number of whales caught during 1955, production of whale oil at 15,876 tons was 790 tons less than in the previous season. Production of meal was also slightly reduced, declining from 5,000 tons to 4,948 tons. The successful production of dry solubles by the Australian Whaling Commission at Carnarvon encouraged other stations to install drying plants. Notwithstanding the reduced quotas and a temporary breakdown of the Carnarvon plant, total production of solubles at 1,410 tons was only 15 tons below that of 1954.

The average yield of oil per whale of 8.6 tons compared with yields of 8.6 tons and 8.5 tons in 1952 and 1953, but was somewhat higher than the average of 8.2 tons in 1954. The small increase is perhaps in some small measure due to the greater selectivity this season in the size of the whales harpooned.

The price of whale oil had shown little variation over the previous three years, but the average price for last season's catch, at £80 - £85 stg., represents a rise of approximately £5 - £10 stg. per ton on 1954 returns. However, as the bulk of the oil production was again sold forward, exact comparisons are not available. The price of solubles rose a little to £A64 per ton as compared with £A60 per ton in 1954, but the price of meal showed little change from the previous season, varying between £A40 and £A45 per ton.

Whaling activities on the east coast are, it

is understood, to be increased during the coming season with the establishment of a further shore-based station at Norfolk Island. It is anticipated that the new venture will have an initial quota of 120 humpbacks, but whether this will cause any revision of existing quotas is at present uncertain. The Minister for Commerce and Agriculture, in discussing the 1955 quotas, said: "The separate east coast stocks are just about holding their own. However, this position is being closely watched and will be subject to annual review."