

82. From your knowledge, how many sheep have been lost by the use of poison?—I should not think two in a thousand; but I know for a fact, where long-woolled sheep have been accustomed to pick up grain on stubble land, many have been lost. I do not think merinoes will suffer if the grain is laid down properly.

83. *Mr. H. Hirst.*] Do you not think a great many rabbits are poisoned in their holes that you never see?—I have known twenty-five dead rabbits taken out of one hole. I believe for every dead rabbit found there are ten not found. We are more likely to see them in our country which is rocky, than where they can burrow deep.

84. *The Chairman.*] Can you give an estimate of the cost of poisoning per 1,000 acres?—That is a difficult thing to arrive at. It cost Mr. Campbell last year to keep the rabbits down on Galloway Station, 168,000 acres, £3,000, for a return of £1,500. There are 64,000 acres at Galloway on which you cannot put sheep in the winter-time.

85. *Hon. Mr. G. R. Johnson.*] Is not winter a good time to poison?—You cannot get men to work among the snow; they will not do it. I might say, with regard to the Government trying to clear the land, that, in my opinion, it is a perfect impossibility to clear the high unoccupied Crown lands in this country; but I think the Government might keep the rabbits in check, and clear along the edges of the occupied lands.

86. How do they live in winter?—I believe they live among the snow-grass, with the snow right over it.

87. *The Chairman.*] Have you tried ferrets?—I have not.

88. On whom should the onus rest of proving that efficient steps have been taken to remedy the evil?—I quite agree with what Mr. Fraser stated—the owner or occupier.

89. Do you think Inspectors should have power to enter upon private property, and destroy rabbits, as indicated by clause 17 of the Act?—Decidedly; on any property whatever. They should go everywhere.

90. Would you recommend increasing the minimum penalty of £1 for failure or refusal to take steps?—I should certainly recommend an increase after the first summoning before the Bench.

91. Do you think that repressive legislation would be best administered by the Government, by County Councils, or trustees?—Decidedly by the Government. You cannot get men elected by local bodies to act in a fair and straightforward manner against those who may have the power to deprive them of their appointments.

92. What was the carrying capacity of the run you manage before the rabbits became a nuisance, and what is the present capacity?—When I took charge of the Galloway Station, seven years ago, the run was overstocked, and I reduced the number to 71,000, hoping, in a year or two, to again increase the stock to at least 76,000; but the number still remains the same, owing to the rabbits. I find no appreciable difference in the wool, except on the breeding portions of the run—the ewes cutting half a pound less per head than formerly, as I had to relax my efforts to keep down the rabbits during the spring and lambing season.

93. Is the condition of your sheep generally equal to what it was before the rabbits became a nuisance? Yes, nearly so; but it has been only secured at a great expense, in always attacking the rabbits.

94. Did Mr. Campbell abandon any runs?—I believe 250,000 acres in Southland.

95. That is to say, the land was not worth keeping?—It was not worth keeping.

96. *Mr. Hirst.*] Is it his intention to abandon the reserve at Burwood?—I do not know. The Burwood property used to carry 80,000 sheep; it now carries 24,000.

97. *The Chairman.*] Are there not a great many runs now in the condition of those abandoned by Mr. Campbell, which have been abandoned by other parties, and are unoccupied?—I believe so; but I have not been in the district where they are. The bulk of the back country in the Wakatipu District has been abandoned, or rendered nearly useless.

*The Chairman:* In confirmation of what has been said by these two witnesses, I may state that several runs were put up for sale in Otago two months ago, and some of them did not meet with a purchaser, even at a very low price. For example, 37,000 acres near Athol were offered for £20 per annum, and there was no purchaser; 34,000 acres in Waikawa were offered at £10 per annum, and found no purchaser. These runs are again advertised in the *Gazette* for sale in the same way and at the same prices. This shows the effect of rabbits on the value of Government runs.

#### APPENDIX C.

THURSDAY, 14TH JULY, 1881.

Mr. JACKSON, of Stonestead, Featherston, examined.

98. *The Chairman.*] What experience have you had of the rabbit pest?—About twelve years ago a neighbour turned out a quantity of rabbits, and in the course of six years they swarmed on my land. They were in great numbers, and destroyed everything. To show the Committee how numerous they were, I was afraid I should have actions for damages from persons travelling on the road getting injured by the burrows made by the rabbits.

99. What means have you employed for abating the nuisance?—I got as many dogs as possible, and in a few months they succeeded very well. I occasionally encouraged them by firing a shot at the rabbits. Now they are so well kept down that, with the exception of one settler's land, the neighbourhood is badly supplied with rabbits.

100. Have you used phosphorus?—No, I never used poison—only dogs; and therefore I know nothing about it.

101. You have not tried ferrets?—No; ferrets are very good if kept tame; but I would not turn them wild. When they become wild they are very dangerous.

102. As to the question what percentage does the return obtained from rabbitskins bear to the cost of keeping down the nuisance?—I think if steps are taken in time they can be prevented from becoming a nuisance.