

198. What percentage does the return from the skins bear to the cost of keeping down the nuisance?—I cannot answer that. I know cases in which the killing of the rabbits may be said to have paid itself. We calculate we lose 1d. per rabbit. The rabbits are mixed. Some are perfect silver-grey, and others are mixed. The skins fetch 3s. a dozen, full grown. The cost varies, so that I cannot say what it would be. I think to poison them down, and then to keep them down with natural enemies, is the best course. I have read that in a part of Spain they were infested with rabbits, and that they could not get rid of them until they imported the African ferret. The African ferret, I think, is the white ferret with red eyes.

199. Has your district been under the Rabbit Nuisance Act?—No. We considered we were better as we are.

200. You thought private combination was best?—Yes. I therefore know nothing about the working of the Act, and cannot suggest any improvements in it.

201. On whom do you think the onus should rest of proving that efficient steps have been taken to remedy the evil?—Well, when we found what would be an efficient course, we were bound to take it, or have nothing left. Mr. Keene's run was quite cleared out.

202. Do you think Inspectors should have power to enter on private property, and destroy rabbits?—I think not. I can hardly believe an owner would not himself attend to it. I have a great objection to Inspectors going on the land. I cannot imagine a case where an owner would not himself do all he could to clear them.

203. *Hon. Mr. Martin.*] But many of them do not?—Well, I cannot give any evidence on that. I should say that, if a man will not do it, it would be necessary for an Inspector to see to it; the same as we have the policeman.

204. *The Chairman.*] Would you increase the minimum penalty of £1 for failure to take steps to remedy the evil?—I cannot say anything about that.

205. Do you think repressive legislation would be best administered by Government, County Councils, or Trustees?—I should say by Trustees. We have no County Council, no machinery at all in connection with the Act.

206. Can you suggest any way of abating the nuisance on Crown land or reserves?—I think Government ought certainly to take the same steps as private owners to poison, and import ferrets and weasels, otherwise it would be most unfair to the private owners.

207. You think that Crown lands should in this respect be just the same as private property?—I think so; otherwise Crown lands would be merely rabbit preserves. We found it necessary to do all we could in the summer. We found, by killing them only in the winter, that we enabled them to breed all the quicker.

208. How would you deal with Native lands?—On that I cannot speak at all.

209. Should power be given to compel governing bodies to put the Act in force, by *mandamus* or otherwise?—That I really do not know. I should never dream of such a thing being necessary. It is like trying to keep out the small-pox.

210. You think the Act is somewhat similar to the Scab Act, and should be administered in the same way?—I do not know. I think, if you got Trustees to carry it out, there would be no difficulty. I am rather opposed to the present Scab Act, and to the way it is worked by the Inspectors.

211. How has the carrying capacity of your district been affected by the Act?—In our district I think rabbits lessened the carrying capacity by about 2,000 sheep in 20,000—that is, 10 per cent. Now, since they have been poisoned, there is very little difference.

212. Did the rabbits, where plentiful, affect the condition of the sheep left on the runs?—Yes; that was the cause of the greatest loss. It greatly affected the condition of the sheep. There were very few fat sheep while the rabbits were numerous.

213. Has the natural pasture been permanently injured by rabbits? We have not found the natural pasture to be permanently injured. Where the land was made very bare by the rabbits this season there has been plenty of feed.

214. *Captain Russell.*] Do you not think rabbits can be destroyed without introducing vermin?—I doubt very much if they could be kept down without natural enemies. I know of no other means.

215. But you say that poison will destroy them to a certain extent?—But during the summer time, when the feed is plentiful, they will not take the poison, and so they breed up again. At Kaikoura they breed up to the same number again. I have heard they will take the poison in summer; but they certainly will not to the same extent. You may poison them, and think you have cleared them, but you will find them to breed up again.

216. *The Chairman.*] There have been no ill-effects from the introduction of weasels in your district?—Only two have been introduced at present. The farmers adjoining do not like the ferrets, which go to the hen-roosts. Ferrets have become numerous, and they are now being sold.

217. There is no game in the Kaikoura District?—No.

218. *Hon. Mr. Nurse.*] You say you think the working of the Act should be left to Trustees?—That is my impression.

219. Are there any Crown lands in your district?—Yes.

220. Could Trustees work that?—I suppose so. There is not a great quantity of Crown land there.

221. Do you not find that land to be a preserve for the rabbits?—Of course. That land should be treated just the same as private lands, otherwise the rabbits will be constantly breeding.

222. Do you not think, then, that the suppression would be better in the hands of the Government?—I do not think so myself. I am inclined, as a rule, to local management. Government does not know these things. All the information has to be supplied to them by others.