

307. What do you consider the best mode of getting rid of the rabbits?—The use of poison.

308. What poison?—Phosphorized oats. I would use, in addition, a few dogs. I would not allow rabbiters to use dogs, but owners of property might have a few good dogs, which they could put in charge of a trustworthy man. After the country was well poisoned off, these dogs might be used in driving the rabbits into the inaccessible grounds where the dogs could not catch them, but the poison would reach them. By these means I believe the rabbits could be kept down to the minimum number.

309. Have you any experience of ferrets?—Yes; I joined with the Hon. Mr. Holmes and about half a dozen others, and brought out 200 ferrets. These were turned out on Castlerock and on my run, and on the runs adjoining.

310. Are you satisfied with the result?—The ferrets made no sensible impression on the rabbits, which were then swarming. All our efforts appeared to fail in keeping the pest in check. In point of fact, the rabbits took possession of the country. Ferrets, dogs, trapping, shooting, and fumigating were all used simultaneously, but failed to keep the rabbits in check.

311. Did you ever try bi-sulphide of carbon?—You can only use that successfully in short burrows. In very large ones it is not so effective, and in the big network warrens, such as are to be found in many places, it is almost useless. I used it for six months. The country in which rabbits burrow is the best country for ferrets to succeed in, because they will get hold of the young ones. The burrows afford good shelter for the ferret.

312. Would bi-sulphide of carbon be likely to kill the ferret?—It would undoubtedly, if it penetrated sufficiently into the burrows to reach them.

313. Then, you are not in favour of rabbiters with dogs?—No, I am not; they hurried my ruin; dog-rabbiting is fatal to sheep-farming. I only advocated the use of a few dogs owned by the owners of stations, and not by rabbiters, whose dogs continually harass and destroy the sheep.

314. Have large packs of dogs left their owners, and gone wild?—I have heard so.

315. Then the phosphorus, and the ferret, and dogs owned by owners of the land are the best means of getting rid of rabbits, and keeping their number under?—Yes; such is my experience. I have packed as many as eighty-five thousand skins in one year, principally dog-caught, before I originated the oat-poisoning process. Yet with all that dogging, and other means of rabbiting, they increased to such an extent as to take almost complete possession of the run.

316. Then, you recommend poisoning?—Yes; and after that a few dogs, and the natural enemy.

317. Are there any remarks that you would like to make as to the working of the Act?—I think this present plan is the nucleus of a good system, but I do not think it is carried out to the extent it might be. It appears to me that the head of the department has too many multifarious duties to attend to to give the necessary supervision. There are district Inspectors who may be very good men; but where there are a number of Inspectors picked up from different classes a lot of them will know nothing about their work, and a good many may not care whether they do their duty or not. They should possess a thorough knowledge of the business they have to go about. You will in most cases be able to judge by results. If I went over a division of country where an Inspector had charge, I should know, by the state of rabbits thereon, whether the Inspector was doing his duty or not. If rabbits are kept down to a minimum, or greatly reduced in numbers throughout, it would show that the man in charge was doing his duty, and was worth his salary; if not, he is worth nothing. What is wanted is a travelling Inspector, to see that these men do their duty: there may be only twenty good men to thirty bad ones.

318. There is Mr. Bayly?—He is the head of the department. It is impossible that he could give the supervision necessary; he has to trust to the district Inspectors. If they are good men it is all right. The same with the Inspector of subdivisions. But it appears to me that the whole thing wants supervising.

319. *Hon. Mr. Nurse.*] Is it your opinion that the Act should be altered so as to restrict the powers of the Inspectors; they appear now to have absolute power to force you to do things which you do not want to do. I would ask an answer, Yes or No?—From my knowledge of the Act they want all the power they have. If they act arbitrarily you can very easily bring them to book. You must not restrict their powers or you will make them nonentities.

320. *Mr. Lance.*] Might I ask in what year you began poisoning?—It was in November, 1879. I commenced with an American recipe. It cost me £2 8s. 6d. when rhodium was at 16s. an ounce, and phosphorus at 20s. per lb. We laid it outside of grass paddocks, where the rabbits were numerous. They did not touch it. It occurred to me, however, that wheat-porridge mixture was not a natural-looking bait for rabbits, and I substituted oats for crushed wheat. The next thing was to dispense with rhodium; that article was expensive. I found that the rabbits took the poisoned oats readily: then destruction was wholesale. It has proved most efficacious throughout the whole colony. It has been stated that the poisoned oats would not be eaten where there is green feed, but they will and do eat it where there is green feed. Rabbits were breeding in thousands on the Crown lands, and were not treated at all. There was a communication sent to the late Colonial Secretary by the Southland members urging my appointment for dealing with rabbits on the Crown lands. The reply intimated that the Government were not prepared to employ my services in that direction.

*Hon. the Chairman:* We have considered whether we could entertain your petition, but we find it is not within the province of this Committee to do so.

WEDNESDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Mr. T. MACKAY, examined.

321. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have you anything to say about the rabbit-pest?—I should like to make a few remarks as to the Rabbit Act. I should like to see a slight alteration in the Act; that