

399. Have they been in great number on your run?—Yes; in great number. We would have thrown up the farm in two years had it not been for the poison, which stopped the increase.

400. But you have been able to stop the increase?—Yes.

401. How have you done that?—Chiefly by poison; using poisoned grain.

402. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] Oats?—Yes; phosphorus and oats.

403. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Was the result satisfactory?—To a certain extent.

404. Have you got them down so that your feed is no longer injured?—We have got them down so that in places where, six years ago, we could not run two hundred sheep, we have lately been running sheep to the extent of six thousand. There are five thousand acres upon which we could not, for the rabbits, run five hundred sheep, upon which we are now keeping six thousand.

405. Do you consider your supply of feed as great now as before the rabbits were there?—Not quite so good, but to a great extent it is.

406. Are you satisfied with the Rabbit Act and the way it is administered in your district?—Yes.

407. Do you think that as it stands it is sufficient to meet the difficulties in the way and capable of bringing about a clearing of rabbits?—Except in one thing. The runholders are compelled by the Inspectors to put on dogs: that is, men and dogs. A good many of us have the idea that the natural enemies of the rabbit are best. These men and dogs kill all the cats, ferrets, and natural enemies they can. We are forced by the Inspector to put on these men.

408. You say that the Inspector compels you?—He compels you in this way: that if you do not do so you will be summoned.

409. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] Do they use the gun as well?—Yes.

410. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You think, then, that rabbiters and dogs are undesirable?—If you have rabbiters at all, have them using ferrets—tame ferrets.

411. You mean tame ferrets to put them in the rabbit-hole?—Yes, and turn the rabbits out.

412. Do you find that poisoning answers at well in summer as in winter?—No; we cannot do anything with it: after August it is no use putting poison on the ground.

413. Have you tried by turning up a sod?—It is utterly useless in spring.

414. Do you think it is that the poison has evaporated or that the rabbits will not take it?—The rabbits will not take it.

415. You are in favour of poisoning and natural enemies?—Yes.

416. Have you any reason to suppose that ferrets will attack lambs or sheep?—No.

417. Have you ferrets on your run?—Yes.

418. Have you tried trapping?—Yes, we tried trapping, and caught seventy ferrets.

419. Have you any reason to suppose that the ferrets attacked or killed any of your sheep?—No, I cannot credit that at all.

420. Apparently ferrets are very easily trapped?—Yes, they are the simplest things to catch. If you put down a common gin-trap you will have a ferret in the morning.

421. Suppose in time the ferrets should become a nuisance?—You could either poison or catch them in traps. I have not the slightest fear of the ferrets getting too numerous.

422. You are satisfied with the Act?—The only thing I see to object to is in the matter of cumulative fines. I think that an Inspector should be satisfied if he gets you fined. But if another Inspector comes down upon you, he gets you fined in a cumulative penalty because of a former conviction. In this respect I think there is too much power thrown into the hands of an Inspector.

423. Will you point out what you refer to?—I think there is too much power given into the hands of agents. If you offend them in any way they can get you into a difficulty. It is well known that all lands have rabbits on them: there are only a few people who have been summoned.

424. Do you think that the Act has been carried out with partiality; that some have been summoned and others not?—That was my idea.

425. That it was not administered alike to all?—No. There is a certain block of country: only three persons have been summoned.

426. Might not the reason be that those who were not summoned made greater efforts?—It is impossible they could have done. We sent away 124,000 skins in four months. But all have done good work.

427. You have been fined?—Yes; we have been fined three times.

428. On what ground?—On the ground of having rabbits.

429. Not that you had neglected to kill them?—No; the Inspector in the last case said there was no neglect; yet we were fined because we had rabbits on the place.

430. Simply on that ground?—Yes.

431. Who was the Inspector?—Mr. Orbell.

432. Were the lands of which the occupiers had not been fined, under the same Inspector?—Yes.

433. You do not know why the others were not fined?—No.

434. If he were to act impartially he would summon all who had rabbits on their lands?—He might have done so.

435. How does the Inspector judge: not by results?—Yes; by results.

436. Might not the fact of you having more than others account for it?—That might be his reason.

437. Might he not say you have not been taking the steps necessary?—I cannot say whether that is the way he would look at it.

438. *Hon. Mr. Williamson.*] I should like to ask a question in reference to what the last witness has said: Do you not suppose that to introduce the stoat and the weasel into this country they would be difficult to get rid of?—No.

439. If these animals can live where every man's hand is against them, with population at the maximum, do you not suppose they would be more difficult to extirpate if they once became