

time to time; all this while the rabbits are increasing. They might be put up at a less rental or a bonus might be given for the destruction of the rabbits on them.

672. *Hon. the Chairman.*] With regard to the Marlborough district, it appears that on the runs rabbits are being kept down satisfactorily by ferrets which have been turned out?—Undoubtedly.

673. You say that would not be sufficient in the south: are you aware of any difference in the country or in the rabbit which accounts for it?—There is a difference in the country; the climate in the south is more severe, and the country in the south is not so well adapted for the ferret. In that part of the country where the ferret has been most successful it is partly timbered; the climate is comparatively very much milder; it is a good many years since the experiment has been started. It has yet to be learned for certain whether it will do as well in the south, which is cold, as in a warmer climate.

674. Is there any difference in the rabbit?—In the Kaikouras it is the silver-grey rabbit; in the south it is the real wild rabbit.

675. *Hon. Mr. Campbell.*] Do you know the Benmore Run: there are ferrets there all over the run; they have exterminated the rabbits?—So I have heard.

676. Do you know the altitude of some portions of it; 6,000 feet, is it not?—Yes; I have seen Benmore under snow for twelve weeks.

677. Is it a dry country?—It is a dry country.

678. Do you think a dry country suits ferrets?—Yes; I believe the “natural enemy” to be the solution of the difficulty.

679. *Mr. Walker.*—Is it not a fact that in South Canterbury the rabbits do not burrow, but live in the tussock?—I cannot say authoritatively; I have seen them in the tussock, but I have not seen them in burrows.

680. But, supposing that to be the habit, would not that account for it?—I think it is rather the fact of not being hunted; the rabbit will naturally form colonies, and, if hunted much, they will burrow for protection.

*Hon. Captain Fraser:* I have seen rabbits burrow in South Canterbury.

682. You spoke of the introduction of stoats and weasels; have you heard any complaints against them?—Not personally. I have received any amount of applications for them. The accounts I have received are the reverse of complaints.

683. Who asked for them?—I have received applications from all parts.

684. We have had evidence here that they were likely to do a great deal of harm?—I do not think so. However, to preclude the possibility of them doing any harm, as far as these persons complaining are concerned, I had them turned out right at the back of an impractical country, where nothing could destroy them—on a piece of land where they cannot wander sufficiently far.

685. Have you any knowledge of the mongoose?—None.

686. Have you any knowledge of the badger?—None.

*Mr. Walker:* There are authorities who say that the badger is herbivorous.

688. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] You know nothing of the mongoose?—A few of them have been tried in Marlborough, but I do not think that any result was ascertained, for they all got away.

689. *Captain Russell.*] Do you think it would be of any use, in endeavouring to stop the spread of rabbits, to put up a rabbit-proof fence as a frontier line, protecting that with weasels?—I do not think the fence will obviate the evil; if the pests get as far as the fence they will get to the other side, or they will be put over by those who may be interested in doing that, to restore their livelihood. It is a good thing, in any case, to erect a fence, but I do not think it will suffice.

690. The Inspector endeavoured to get the Government to erect a rabbit-proof fence on the boundary between Wellington and Hawke's Bay, did he not?—I think it was so.

691. Was your opinion asked by the Government?—No, it was not referred to me.

692. You did not know that the Government were applied to to join in the erection of a rabbit-proof fence?—I did know that much.

693. It was not referred to you?—I gave no opinion.

694. Ought it to have been referred to you?—If they were determined to act, I have no doubt it would have been referred to me.

695. Do you know the locality?—Yes; Waimata.

696. Do you not think that would be a good place to prevent the spread of rabbits?—Yes; an attempt has been made to arrive at that. One fence such as you describe has been put up a certain distance: there are one or two rabbit agents closely watching that country; as soon as they see any traces of rabbits the ferrets are turned out.

697. Do you know who are the executive officers?—The man who has charge of the ferrets; the fence is on the Sheep Inspector's boundary.

698. Do you know who is practically carrying on the work?—I presume it is the Chief Inspector, Mr. Paisley.

699. You are not aware that it is really a committee of settlers?—Not independently of the Inspector.

700. You know the principal movers in the matter?—Yes.

701. Do you know how the funds for it are collected?—I do not know.

702. I may mention that they come from a voluntary rate; but I was about to ask you whether it would be desirable to have a certain district proclaimed in which a rate might be levied for the purpose?—If the necessity arises for that. I think it should be dealt with in the same way as other parts of the country.

703. Do you think that the Government holding the adjacent land should have joined in the expense of taking the necessary steps to stop the pest?—I think so.

704. If this matter were referred to you, you would have advised that the Government should join?—I might have done so; I might have preferred to recommend that the natural enemies should be turned out.