

legalized, and the Fencing Act amended in that direction. If such were done numbers of persons who are precluded from using this means of protection through not being able to recover from the owners adjoining them would at once adopt it, and thus be able to protect their ground from being re-infested from other holdings, and with the certainty of being able to keep down the rabbit on their own properties.

No fresh methods have been reported as having been used during the year. One is now being brought under the notice of the department by a resident in Otago, who claims to have discovered the means of poisoning the rabbit with phosphorized grain as effectually during the summer as in the winter months; even if so, this cannot be tested for some months.

There is no doubt that phosphorized grain in winter, together with the natural enemy, are the most efficacious means yet attempted, and, failing any further importation of weasels and stoats for the inaccessible country, I would strongly recommend that two ferret-breeding dépôts be established, one to be situated at the head of Lake Wanaka, so as to supply the Haast country and between that and Hawea; and the other one on Lake Ohau station, to supply the country on the west side of Dobson River; and, further, that the Government continue to offer such a price for breeding them as will induce persons to go largely into it, the whole number so procurable to be released throughout the Crown lands of the colony, and specially on the rough and unoccupied areas.

Although last year has been a disastrous one, yet I do not think that the rabbits have actually increased in numbers. I know positively myself that in some places they are less numerous than they were previously, but undoubtedly the general effect of the past season's work is less apparent, and this winter's poisoning will again reduce them within certain limits.

That no actual increase occurred is proved by the sheep returns, which in the infested districts show a considerable increase again this year: this could not be the case had the rabbits become as numerous as formerly. The great difficulties we have to deal with are the vast areas of waste lands, commonages, reserves, and several other descriptions of lands which are thrown upon the department, and which could be let for grazing purposes, and the Government relieved of this burden. Some uniform system should be initiated throughout the colony, so that waste lands, &c., should be dealt with similarly to private lands, and thus give relief to those persons whose properties adjoin these areas.

Statistical information will be appended when returns come to hand.

I have, &c.,

BENJN. P. BAYLY,

Superintending Inspector.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

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