

139. How many men do you employ yourself in rabbiting?—We have a permanent staff of about twenty all the year round. We have now got about a hundred men, during the poisoning season.

140. And how many acres have you got where you employ these hundred men, leasehold and freehold?—We have about a hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand acres, where they are actually working.

141. *Mr. Cowan.*] It is to be inferred from what you say that there is a time of the year when it does not pay to kill rabbits?—Yes—in summer.

142. I suppose the ground on which you make that statement is, that the commercial value of the skins which you get at that time does not pay for the cost of getting them?—That is so.

143. What do you suggest that the Government should give during the summer months as a bonus for the skins?—A bonus would certainly have the effect of stimulating the small settlers—and particularly the small men—to kill rabbits coming down on their farms.

144. It would also act as an inducement, I imagine, to the owners of the land to proceed with killing as they do at other times of the year?—Yes; anything in that way will undoubtedly stimulate them to carry on the work they are doing. Of course, large owners must carry on the work for their own protection. Although they get their leasehold lands at a nominal rent, the rent becomes a serious matter when they have to add to it the cost of keeping down the rabbits. Although the land may be got for 3d. an acre, the cost of the destruction of the rabbits brings it up to 9d.

145. I gather from your evidence, also, that the present Rabbit Act is not sufficiently strict to compel the Government to do its duty?—I do not know whether it is sufficiently strict in its powers and regulations; I only know that these regulations are not carried out, if it is so. I do not know why the Government should be treated in any other way from a squatter or a settler.

146. Is not the Government very much interested in this question?—Yes; and if they do not tackle it very seriously the result will be something appalling, perhaps.

147. *Mr. Kerr.*] As a matter of fact, the land which you have thrown up must cause you a great deal more expense in looking after?—Considerably.

148. It would be no use for you to endeavour to exterminate the rabbits from your own place, because you would get a constant supply from the Government lands?—Certainly. I had occasion to go up to Queenstown recently, and the rabbits are absolutely swarming on the unoccupied lands.

149. If you were to neglect to look after your lands for a period of six or twelve months, they would be absolutely worthless?—Yes, if we neglected the land for one season. It is only constant and careful watching that enables us to keep the rabbits down at all.

150. You think that they could be kept within reasonable bounds?—They could.

151. *Captain Russell.*] Do you avail yourself of wire-netting?—Yes, we have done everything.

152. Do you find it very useful?—In certain parts of the country—rugged country.

153. Is a perfectly rabbit-proof fence useful in preventing the spread?—Yes; it keeps them from coming down from the ranges.

154. And you think that where rabbits have not already invaded the country, it might intercept them?—Decidedly.

155. Then you think it wise to allow districts which are not already infected to levy rates to erect such fences?—Yes

156. Do you think that would have any effect?—Certainly.

157. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Of course a fence would be of material benefit in killing rabbits if you drove them to the fence and caught them at it, as in Australia; but will the fence keep out the rabbits? Do you know whether they go over it, or burrow under it?—If the fence is properly put down, they cannot burrow under it.

158. Do you know whether they can go over the fence?—I have heard of them going up trees in Australia, but never heard of them going over a fence here.

159. What special means would you advise for the purpose of destroying rabbits on high unoccupied lands?—Poisoning. I also think it would be a good thing to turn out stoats and weasels.

160. Ought this to devolve on the local body of the district?—If you are going to appoint special Boards for the purpose, I decidedly think it should be left to them.

161. *Mr Kerr.*] Do you not think it would be better to have Boards elected with power that the Government should see that each district carried out the work properly?—Decidedly.

162. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Do you recommend any other means besides poisoning for exterminating the rabbits?—Turning out natural enemies. That is, to keep them within certain limits. I believe that where stoats have already been turned out the result has been satisfactory. Stoats and weasels are better than ferrets. When a ferret has had his feed he goes to sleep, but a weasel will kill for the sake of killing.

163. Do you think the climate in the south is too cold for ferrets?—I do not know. I have seen something like mange among them.

*Mr. McKenzie:* They are liable to that.

165. *Hon. Mr. Buckley.*] Since the date of the circular produced (26th April, 1886), have you received any notice from the Inspectors?—I left home on the 3rd of May, and so that circular would not have had time to get down there by that time. We have never got any notice from any of the Inspectors.

166. The circular was sent to the Inspectors to instruct them to do their duty. I want to know whether, since the date of it or prior to it, did you get any notice from the Inspector to clear the land?—No.