

200. Does he or his Sub-Inspector make periodical visits to inquire about the rabbits?—One Inspector went out last October. That is the only one we ever had. We wished them several times to come, but they do not care to do so.

201. And, for some reason or other that you cannot account for, the Inspectors do not enforce the Rabbit Act on the adjoining lands?—They do not. There is a large block of country that was recently being worked by the Bank of New Zealand, as we understand, and it has been swarming with rabbits for years. They turned out some ferrets, but they sold the rest that they had, and broke up their ferret establishment, and when the Inspectors asked them to do something they put on two men on a strip of country thirty-five miles in length by about five wide, to do the poisoning. Now the Sheep Department have taken charge of the district they are going ahead and are working hard; but it is too late now.

202. You are not speaking now with regard to what is taking place at the present moment?—No. I believe Inspector Clifton is doing his best to get the rabbits under.

203. For how long was it neglected in this way?—There was no pressure brought on them to do anything. When the Bank of New Zealand was working the country the Inspectors took no notice of it.

204. When did they begin to work energetically?—The Sheep Department, I understand, took the country over on the 23rd February last. It was abandoned for a month. Then, in addition to this, the rabbits have been allowed to increase up the Acheron and Guide, where the country is now swarming with rabbits.

205. The same thing applies to all this district?—To the Kaikoura and back portion of the Amuri District. We kept on trying to get the Inspectors to do something; but they pooh-poohed the idea, and ignored us, and said there was no more danger now than there was two years ago, while a month afterwards Inspector Forster wrote that the whole position was now most serious, and the pest was getting worse, utterly beyond the control of the owners of the infected runs. Things have got so serious that they are talking of running a wire-fence down the whole way. There was a meeting the other day, and a proposition was made to get the Government to assist.

206. Can you show the position of the lands that you are referring to?—[Plan produced.]—The Inspector tells us that the increase of rabbits on the Acheron and Guide Rivers is due to their having been hunted over from the Awatere by ferrets; but, in reality, there have been very few ferrets turned out in the Upper Awatere, and the rabbits in the Acheron and Clarence are of a different breed from the rabbits in the Awatere. I think that proves that they have not been hunted over, but have come up the Clarence.

207. I suppose that the ferrets would spread the rabbits?—There is no doubt about it: they do spread them.

208. How far have those rabbits spread down southwards?—I think they have got up to about Jollie's Pass.

209. Can you state what length of country they occupy?—There are a few rabbits right down to the Waiau River. The whole of the Marlborough Province, in fact, is overrun with rabbits; also a considerable portion of the Nelson Province.

210. You spoke of wire-fencing that they were going to put up?—They talk of erecting a fence from Lake Tennyson down to the Clarence River, over Jack's Pass, and down to the junction of the Hanmer and Waiau Rivers. That is to prevent the rabbits getting down into Canterbury. They also talk of running another fence from the Clarence over to the Conway.

211. You think that a fence carried to the Conway would shut out the bulk of the rabbits?—There is no doubt that it would keep out a great many of them; but it will be a very expensive work. It will cost about £100 per mile.

212. You can get it done for that?—I do not think you can get it done for less. Some wire-fencing we had put up cost us £100 per mile.

213. In regard to your own run, you say you have kept down the rabbits on that by means of ferrets, while the adjoining lands are much infested. How do you manage to keep them off your own run?—As regards the rabbits in the Clarence and the block of country I talk of, there are not a great many alongside of us. They have not actually come up on to us; but we are afraid that as soon as they start poisoning the rabbits will come up in a body and invade us.

214. Where do you obtain your phosphorus? Do you buy it in the colony?—We generally get it from Dalgetty and Co.'s, in Christchurch.

215. You do not have to import it?—We have never required a large enough quantity to make it worth while to do that. We have never allowed the rabbits to get the start of us.

216. Phosphorus is expensive, I believe, to import?—I do not know for certain. I think you can import it for about 4s. per pound.

217. Including all charges?—I think so. I know several people in Blenheim who used to import it; and it cost them about 4s.

218. How much would it cost to get it in small quantities here?—About 7s.

219. Nearly double the price of imported?—Yes.

220. It would be a great boon, then, if the Government imported it and sold it at cost-price?—Yes, I think so.

221. In the case of small holders the quantities they would have to buy would be naturally small?—Yes.

222. Do you know the Rabbit Act of 1882?—I have looked at it several times.

223. Do you think it has worked satisfactorily?—I cannot say. You see it never has been worked in our district.

224. Have you any suggestion to make in regard to it?—The only suggestion that I could make is that I would like to see it carried out.

225. Your objection, then, is not to the character of the Inspector?—They are utterly useless.