

380. What is about the cost per head?—This year they have ranged from 7s. to 10s.; but a few have been bought lower.

381. Supposing a private individual wanted ferrets to turn out on his own land, he not having bred any, would the Government sell to him?—He is left to provide for himself. All private individuals will not or do not buy.

382. Is it, then, with the object of assisting those who are breeding, so that they may find a market for all that they may wish to sell?—That is so.

383. Then, if the private individuals do not buy, the Government will?—Yes.

384. Do you know whether many have been killed on Crown lands by rabbiters?—I have heard of it, but we have no proof of it; but that such is done I have not the slightest doubt.

385. You say phosphorus is the best poison?—There is no doubt of it.

386. What do you mix it with—oats or wheat?—Sometimes one and sometimes the other.

387. How are you guided?—If the rabbits do not take the oats freely, wheat is tried.

388. Is it according to different parts of the year?—No.

389. The Government imports its own phosphorus?—They have bought it in the colony hitherto.

390. Would it not be a good thing for the Government to procure phosphorus, so that private owners might obtain it at cost-price?—I think, as a rule, the private owners can get it quite as cheaply, if not cheaper, by getting it direct from Home than they could get it from the Government.

391. The Government could get it more cheaply in large quantities than in small quantities, and agents would require a profit on it?—A great many owners import it themselves.

392. But there are a large number of small owners?—To supply these we keep small dépôts.

393. At cost price?—I think it is at an advance of 3d. per lb., to pay for the expense of storage.

394. Would it not be better for the Government to import direct for itself?—I believe it would be the cheapest, certainly.

395. Can you state the proportion in which it is mixed?—From 1lb. to 1½lb. to every 100lb. of grain.

396. Do you use sugar or rhodium?—Very rarely. Salt is sometimes used with advantage; and the only time that sugar, or rhodium, or aniseed is used is in summer time.

397. How long will phosphorized corn remain on the ground without losing its strength?—It wholly depends on the season. In winter time it will stand for ten days; in summer it would not stand forty-eight hours.

398. What weakens it?—The hot weather. In frosty dry weather it stands longer. In wet weather it gets washed out.

399. Do you use much sulphide of carbon for fumigating?—Not much. It has been used down south. You can only use it where there is stiff soil.

400. But there is a danger of killing the natural enemies if you use that?—Yes.

401. Have you had any reports of sheep being killed by poisoned grain?—Very few.

402. With regard to the Crown lands, commonage, and reserves, there are still large quantities of land unoccupied?—Yes, a great quantity.

403. Where are those lands, chiefly?—Principally in the south, between the lakes and the West Coast, following right up to the Mackenzie country.

404. Do you consider it is the duty of the Government to keep down rabbits on unoccupied lands?—Certainly I do.

405. It is a matter of importance to the Government?—Yes; it should be done.

406. Have you been taking efficient steps to kill them?—We have taken what steps were available—we have had the ground poisoned, and turned out natural enemies; but there are millions of acres you have no access to.

407. It seems to me that the task of keeping down rabbits by poison and other means entirely depends on co-operation, and performing the work continuously and over a large area at the same time. Are you following out any definite plan in regard to these considerations?—During the last two years combined action has been taken as much as possible everywhere to get every one to start at once and poison at as near the same time as possible.

408. And have you been acting in regard to the unoccupied lands simultaneously with the holders of land adjoining?—That is more than I can tell you, but I believe it has been done as far as possible. But there are large tracts of unoccupied lands that have been thrown up, and are simply surrounded by waste lands again.

409. What do you do in a case like that?—We have to let a contract to poison this block in the best manner possible. We generally allow the property-owner so much for poisoning the Crown lands adjacent to his boundary. He, being interested, would do the work most satisfactorily.

410. How do you make these contracts?—They are generally advertised, and, as a rule, the lowest tender is accepted.

411. It is not done by giving a bonus?—Where the owner is alongside the Crown lands we give him so much.

412. Is not a bonus given on the rabbits?—No.

413. You have had some difficulty with regard to the commonages. Has that difficulty been overcome?—No: the matter is in just the same position.

414. There is a commonage, for instance, at Cromwell, and at one or two other places. Are they still vacant?—Yes. I think tenders are now in the office for the destruction of rabbits at Cromwell.

415. Would you recommend netting on a large scale?—Wherever available.

416. Have you thought where it would be of use?—Do you speak generally on the question, or simply as a departmental matter?