

outside boiler must not be allowed to boil while the oats are in the cylinder. I think it is better to have fresh poison made every time rather than run the risk of laying poison which has been made for some time, as it sours.

1048. Can you make rabbits take poison in the summer?—We tried in 1882, and killed a large number of them. I think in very small quantities they will take it all the year round. I am afraid the only means of destruction in summer is to turn out natural enemies, and employ men to shoot.

1049. You have not tried the natural enemies to a large extent?—Only ferrets.

1050. What number have you turned out?—Several hundreds, and I have sold a great number of them to the settlers around. I sold about a hundred this year.

1051. Have you heard any complaint about the natural enemies?—No.

1052. Do you think there is any danger from them?—No.

1053. You are not afraid of their killing lambs?—No. We have never lost anything through them yet.

1054. Have you any unoccupied lands in your neighbourhood?—There is not much now. I think the land is pretty well all taken up. We have some Native lands.

1055. Are there complaints of rabbits not being killed on them?—I have heard complaints about it, and I think the Inspector is taking steps now.

1056. Do you think it is the duty of the Government to keep down rabbits on unoccupied Crown lands?—Most decidedly.

1057. You think it is a matter of importance?—Unless they do that, our efforts are upset at once.

1058. What would you suggest with regard to the occupiers of Crown lands who have short leases?—Of course short leases mean low rents. I do not think the Government can very well afford to help them; but I think Crown lands should be leased for a definite period, and, if they could not manage that, they could give to some person the right to run stock, on condition that they poisoned the land.

1059. Do you think people would take it up on those terms?—Yes; especially those who adjoin such lands, in order to get rid of the rabbits.

1060. From year to year?—Yes.

1061. Have you tried wire-netting?—No; but I think it ought to be made a legal fence—that is a defect in the Fencing Act—so as to enable you to call on your neighbour to contribute. As regards ourselves, if we had wire-netting we should have no trouble at all. Last winter it only cost about £40 for fencing twenty-four thousand acres.

1062. How do you think the wire-netting would assist you?—If a person had rabbits inside you could kill them.

1063. Do you think the fence would keep out the rabbits?—In a part of our land it would be very difficult to keep them out, but still it would be a great help.

1064. I suppose you have Inspectors in your district?—We have four or five, I think.

1065. Do any of them ever pay you a visit?—They have not had much occasion to do so, but I believe the Inspector passes sometimes. I should like to say I think it is a mistake to expect neighbours to call his attention to the state of a holding: it ought to be inspected by the Inspector.

1066. Are you referring now to vigilance committees?—Yes. If an Inspector were appointed at Dunedin to have the whole control over the Otago District it would be better.

1067. Have you any complaint to make against the Inspector?—No.

1068. You think he does his duty?—I think so.

1069. I notice in the South meetings are held before the end of autumn to arrange for simultaneous poisoning: do you follow that in your district?—They do. In Shag Valley they started poisoning six weeks ago, and we are about to start in our district now.

1070. Has the Inspector power to compel you to poison at any particular time?—He can give notice to start on a certain day.

1071. If they do not comply with that?—I suppose he would take steps against them.

1072. Has any case of that sort occurred in your district?—Not yet.

1073. It is asserted that the Act is so worded that the Magistrates are unwilling to convict, because the language used is so indefinite?—I think one or two cases have been lost through the wording of the Act in reference to the locality; the number of the section or particular gully, it was held, ought to be mentioned in the information, and the notice was held to be insufficient because it did not describe the land.

1074. Objection has also been raised in the Magistrates' Courts to the interpretation of the word "immediately" used in the clause requiring steps to be taken to kill rabbits?—In ten days steps ought to be taken.

1075. You are satisfied with the working of the Act?—So far as I know. A lot of people think it very stringent, and perhaps it is a great power for a man to be in a position to say that you have got rabbits on your land and you cannot say yea or nay.

1076. Do you think any change should be made in the administration of the Act by handing it over to County Councils or local bodies?—No.

1077. Not even to trustees to be appointed?—I think if we had a good Inspector in Dunedin for all Otago it would do away with the necessity for all that sort of thing. To hand the work over to County Councils, &c., would be to create too much local jealousy.

1078. I suppose you would also advocate a central Inspector in other provincial districts?—Yes. Inspectors often say they have telegraphed to Wellington and cannot get a definite answer, and this is a loophole for them. I think it is a hard thing that people should be allowed to grow gorse-hedges to harbour rabbits, and I do not think the clause in the Act is definite enough to prevent it. I have asked a member of the County Council to get these hedges cleared, but the majority of Councillors will not take any steps.

1079. You think there ought to be further legislation to compel County Councils to clear gorse from the hedges?—Yes.