

occasional slight falls of snow, that the phosphorized grain froze to the ground as soon as laid, and for some weeks good work could only be done on the sunny faces in high country. As the spring advanced, and there being no heavy rains to drown the young rabbits in their nests, or clear the banks of rivers, a wonderful increase of the pest was noticed by Christmas, and great pressure had to be put on landowners in order to keep it in check. Some 103 summonses were taken out, the fines inflicted, however, being in nearly every case the lowest allowed by law. Although rabbits increased so rapidly in the low country and along banks of rivers and bush-lands, there has not been a similar increase on the hills, and many people attribute this to the natural enemies. The return of rabbit-skins exported show a decrease of 2,641,466 for the year.

During the season 2,230 ferrets have been purchased by Government, and turned out principally on high country. About 5,000 ferrets have also been liberated by private individuals. Several runholders, who had made proper arrangements for breeding large numbers of ferrets, turned out all or most of their breeding-stock when they found that the Government had stopped all contracts, objecting to having to bear all the expense themselves.

No weasels or stoats have been liberated in Otago during the year, but several of those (or their progeny) which were turned out at Lake Wanaka some five years ago have lately been seen in various places, one having been killed at mouth of Okuru River, on West Coast. Mr. Symons, of Makarora Station, reports that the natural enemy is now keeping the rabbits well down on his country without any summer assistance. The Wallace district still continues in a very satisfactory condition, and Sub-Inspector Miles states that the ferrets are doing excellent work in the very rough country between Molyneux River and Blue Mountains. Sub-Inspector Fullarton also speaks hopefully of them in Catlin's district.

I desire to again call attention to the very serious spread of gorse and broom on river-banks, mining reserves, public roads, and unoccupied private lands. It is only indirectly that owners can be compelled to clear land of gorse under Rabbit Nuisance Act, and it is next to useless trying to get public bodies to enforce cutting back gorse on road-lines, so many of them being personally interested. I regret having to state that the use of grain steeped with strychnine for the destruction of small birds is also killing numbers of cats.

I have, &c.,

ALFRED DOUGLASS, Inspector.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands (Stock Department), Wellington.

From Sub-Inspector W. MILLER, Oamaru.

(1.) Phosphorized grain, shooting, digging out, hand-working ferrets, and liberating ferrets. (2.) Would recommend that the liberation of the natural enemy be continued. Considering the difficulties of dealing with the rabbit-pest on high back country, am of opinion that upset rentals should be fixed very low. (3.) Successful poisoning during winter months, but, owing to an exceptionally dry summer, a decided increase is noticed in certain localities. Throughout the district, generally, however, there is a marked improvement. (4.) Two. (5.) £55. (6.) Seven reserves, 6,853 acres; 43,000 acres Crown runs: total, 49,853 acres: about 40,000 acres fit for grazing. (7.) 224lb. (8.) 16lb. (9.) 280lb. (10.) Two. (11.) Two. (12.), (13.) Nil. (14.) Three. (15.) Two hundred and fifty; reported doing well. (16.) About 200; so far, doing well. *General Remarks.*—Landowners in the Waitaki district appear to adopt a better system of dealing with the rabbit-pest than formerly, and, consequently, more effectual work is done. Preparations are now being made for a thorough poisoning during the forthcoming winter.

From Sub-Inspector R. HULL, Palmerston.

(1.) Poisoned grain, trapping, dogging, shooting, digging out and fumigating burrows, ferrets and nets, and flooding by water-races where practicable. (2.) That wire netting be made a legal fence; that the continued turning out of the natural enemy be encouraged by granting a bonus; that stoats and weasels be procured for Crown lands; and, if possible, some restriction be placed on the sale of rabbit-skins, to prevent the farming of rabbits. (3.) The good work done in the winter has been almost nullified by the unprecedented dryness of the season, which has enabled the young rabbits to survive. On the whole, rabbits are not quite so numerous as last year, as much better work has been done during the summer. (4.) Three. (5.) £17. (6.) Ten river-mining and commonages; about 1,400 acres altogether, about half of which is available for grazing. (7.), (8.), (9.), Nil. (10.) Twenty-one. (11.) Twenty. (12.) None; one case withdrawn. (13.) Nankeville and Son, H. Benjamin. (14.) Two. (15.) None turned out by Government. (16.) Very few. *General Remarks.*—It is impossible to estimate the progress made in the destruction of rabbits this year, as such a dry season was never known before, which doubled the difficulty of suppressing the pest. I should say, however, that quite twice the number of rabbits have been killed during the summer in this district than there were last year. One of the greatest evils to contend with is the desire some owners have to save the rabbits till the winter, when the skins are more valuable.

From Sub-Inspector R. CORBETT, Clyde.

(1.) Poison, trapping, shooting, ferretting with nets, digging out, and flooding out. (2.) That cats, stoats, weasels, and ferrets be turned out in large numbers, and that trained ferrets and shooting and digging out take the place of trapping, and that hunting with packs of dogs should not be permitted. (3.) Fair. Owing to the very dry season, settlers have been hard pushed to cope with the pest, chiefly along the banks of creeks. (4.) Seven. (5.) £610. (6.) Hunter country, about 30,000 acres; grazing, about 15,000 acres: Cromwell Commonage, about 9,000 acres, all grazing; Clyde Commonage, 5,700 acres, all grazing; Hawea Hundreds, about 12,000 acres, all grazing; Hawea Bush Reserve, about 2,000 acres. (7.) 10lb. (8.) 40lb. (9.) 100lb. (10.) Ten. (11.) Ten. (12.) Nil. (13.) Clyde Cemetery Trust and Vincent County Council. (14.) Nine.