

A considerable volume of evidence of an undue increase of these animals in many districts was submitted to the Department by other Government Departments, local authorities, and a wide range of interests and persons. This matter was fully explored with a view to determining the measures necessary to meet the situation.

In order to induce an intensification of trapping and enable farmers and others to cope with animals causing damage to crops, gardens, plantations, orchards, &c., it was decided to seek authority to amend the regulations by removing many of the existing restrictions on the taking of opossums and the possession and disposal of their skins.

The matter is still being pursued and arrangements are in train to conduct field investigations.

(5) *Assumption of Control of Acclimatization District in the South Island*

At the request of the Lakes District Acclimatization Society, the Government decided to assume control of the district controlled by the society. The boundaries of the Southland, Otago, and Westland Acclimatization Districts were altered to permit of certain portions contiguous to the Lakes district being added thereto, the new district thus formed, called the "Southern Lakes Acclimatization District," being administered by this Department as from 1st September, 1945.

C. WILD ANIMAL PEST CONTROL OPERATIONS

(1) *Soil Conservation and Rivers Control*

The principle that this Department should continue to accept responsibility for controlling throughout New Zealand all of the many species of wild browsing animals, except rabbits, wild pigs, and hares, which constitute so grave a menace to the vegetative cover of soil and are so potent a cause of erosion was adopted in an arrangement entered into with the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council and all Catchment Boards.

(2) *Personnel*

(a) Shortage of experienced staff, and, indeed, even of comparatively unskilled operatives of the type necessary for this work, has limited the scope of operations. Special attention, therefore, has been paid to the recruitment and training of a nucleus of the hunting personnel required and the field staff necessary to control future operations. The scheme now operating is designed to qualify casual workers for advancement to permanent positions on the field staff.

(b) Returned servicemen have been given employment in considerable numbers, and this class of employment has proved most popular with those desirous of undertaking outdoor work possessing a background of adventure combined with possibilities of advancement and the permanency pertaining to an undertaking of national importance.

(3) *High-level Huts and Air Transportation*

A comprehensive scheme, to embrace all remote mountain areas of country infested by deer, &c., for the establishment of huts in high-level locations, the conveyance thereto of the huts in a prefabricated state, and the servicing of parties based thereon with provisions and equipment by air transport was embarked upon.

The huts were designed by the Architectural Branch of the Public Works Department, and test droppings of both hut-building materials and provisions were successfully conducted as the result of the co-operation of the Aerodromes Branch of that Department. These investigations open the way to vastly increased efficiency in the conduct of operations in the difficult mountain regions by the basing of parties at high-level points remote from avenues of supply by other means.