

- (e) *Rural Fire Officers* are appointed by the Fire Authority for the district under its control. There may be one or more Rural Fire Officers appointed for each district. The powers and duties of a Rural Fire Officer are clearly set out in the Act, and in particular he is required, on being advised of the existence of a fire which in his opinion constitutes a hazard to life and property, to proceed or arrange for a deputy to proceed with all possible speed to the fire and endeavour to extinguish it and prevent its spreading. He may requisition the assistance of male persons over the age of eighteen.
- (f) The State Forest Service is required to provide a fire prediction and warning service from which warnings and information may be published in newspapers or broadcast from broadcasting-stations. On any day in respect of which a warning has been given by the Minister or Director of an extreme fire hazard in a particular area, no fire may be lit in the open air, notwithstanding the existence of permits to light fires.

In the event of conditions arising which present an extreme fire hazard or when any forest or rural fires have spread or appear likely to spread beyond the district of a single Fire Authority, the Director of Forestry or Conservator of Forests may take charge. The Minister may determine what proportion of the costs incurred are to be borne by the Fire Authorities affected.

- (g) *A Fires Appeal Tribunal* of three persons is established to which an appeal may be made from such matters as a notice to make a fire-break, a notice requiring maintenance of fire-fighting apparatus, a levy imposed by a Fire Authority of a rural fire district to meet its ordinary requirements, a levy to meet costs of fire-fighting imposed on owners of land affected, and against the Minister's apportionment of fire-fighting costs in a regional fire emergency.

Although the Act has been in force for only a short period, there is already evidence that it will prove to be an effective instrument in reducing the number of forest fires which hitherto recurred annually and in preventing the destruction and widespread damage to both forest and soil cover which resulted.

The reconstitution of fire districts is proceeding smoothly and as rapidly as possible. In addition to State forests and other Crown areas, several applications from local bodies and afforestation companies are at present being dealt with.

46. *Forest (Fire-prevention) Regulations 1940 (Reprint)*, (Serial Number 1946/246).—There was no amendment to the regulations during the year. The authority for these regulations is contained in section 63 of the Forests Act, 1921–22, but with the enactment of the Forest and Rural Fires Act, 1947, all fire district provisions of the Forests Act have been repealed and it is now necessary to revise the regulations accordingly. This work is in hand, and when completed the regulations will apply entirely to State forests.

47. *Animal Damage*.—Rabbits and opossums are still the most serious pests, with the opossums becoming an increasing problem in exotic forests, and being reported this year from Rotoehu Forest, Rotorua Conservancy. Deer, pigs, goats, and various other animals are also causing damage, but continual shooting is holding the numbers down in most areas.

48. *Animals Destroyed*.—The following are the recorded numbers of animals killed in State forests: rabbits and hares, 139,507 (34,532); deer (all species), 2,956 (1,534); pigs, 3,225 (1,538); goats, 294 (238); opossums, 6,042 (4,329); other animals, 145 (—).

The very large increase in the numbers of rabbits destroyed is due to operations at Gwavas Forest, where planting areas for the coming season are being intensively poisoned and trapped.