

14. *Opossums*.—The continued low price of skins and the consequent decrease in trapping operations are reflected in the smaller number killed. These animals are on the increase in all parts of the country and are certainly extending their range, the greatest increase being probably in the Wellington and Westland Conservancies. The latter conservancy reports that they appear to be increasing at an alarming rate. Control measures are meantime by trapping and poisoning, but poisoning is resorted to by the Forest Service only under permit for special cases; and methods used are those recommended provisionally and to some extent controlled by the Department of Internal Affairs. Experiments in methods of control are being carried out by the Wildlife Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs.

15. *Deer*.—Deer-destruction parties employed by the Department of Internal Affairs have reduced the numbers of deer in the Wairarapa, but the general position has not otherwise changed. In beech forests throughout the country and in high-country protection forests in Southland, deer cause severe damage by destroying regeneration, and they are one of the major problems confronting the Forest Service.

16. *Rabbit Control*.—Very broadly speaking, the large-scale extermination of rabbits is no longer a problem of such direct concern to the Forest Service as it was ten years or more ago when large areas were being planted annually and the young trees were very vulnerable to rabbit and hare depredations. This particular phase of the problem is still relevant at Gwavas, and on a few of the other areas where smaller annual plantings have taken place; but the emphasis of the problem as it occurs in forests as a whole, has shifted to the concern necessitated by a good-neighbour and good-husbandry policy. From being directly concerned with depredations to forest stock the Forest Service has become indirectly concerned with depredations on adjacent farm lands, the owners of which, having of recent years adopted a policy of increased intensity of rabbit-killing, tend to regard protected and non-rateable forests as a reservoir for a rabbit population that replenishes the depleted farm population.

17. The increasing intensity of the national campaign against rabbits has seen an increase in the number of official organizations to direct the campaign—the Rabbit Destruction Council, a greatly increased number of local Rabbit Boards, the Animal Ecology Section of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Wildlife Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs. All of these organizations now handle various aspects of a problem in addition to those dealt with by the Department of Agriculture and the comparatively few Rabbit Boards of long standing. The Forest Service task is to co-operate with them all and be a good neighbour to all and it is not the simplest task, when policies (sometimes even of adjacent organizations) differ, as they are bound to do in matters of detail at least. So far as is humanly possible, the Forest Service now tries to make its policy and methods in each locality conform to that of the organization controlling rabbits on adjacent or surrounding land. This of necessity, means that in some details the Forest Service practice is no longer uniform for the whole Service. As a result of this, revenue from sales of skins and from permits to trap rabbits on State Forest no longer figures as an item of forest revenue, and *ex gratia* payments duly authorized as payments in lieu of the Rabbit Board rates as paid by adjoining landowners figure as items of forest expenditure in many localities. This follows from Service adoption of the general national policy advocated by the Rabbit Destruction Council that no product of the rabbit pest shall be commercialized. One effect of it which has had to be carefully watched is that there has been a tendency to offer for Forest Service purchase deteriorated properties on which Rabbit Board rating tended to fall heavily. Many properties which could be offered for forest reservation on grounds of protection from erosion, really meant no more than that the rabbit-rate burden would be transferred from the occupier's shoulders to that of the general taxpayer. Unless such a property could be promptly dealt with by immediate afforestation, this transference of pest burden seems unfair; and much discretion was exercised in consequence in accepting properties offered for acquisition by purchase.