

various experiments or demonstrations may be conducted, if necessary over a term of years, with compensation to the person or persons providing the land and doing the cultivation, &c., is now aimed at.

So far only one such area has been definitely arranged—namely, in Fields Supervisor McCulloch's district, at Gore, its extent being 30 acres. Arrangements are in progress for areas at Thames, Waihi, and Whakatane under Supervisor Rowan's superintendence. Other Fields Supervisors have this matter in hand, and further developments may be expected during the ensuing year.

A considerable number of plot experiments have still been carried out during the past year, pending the establishment of the areas above referred to on the new basis.

In order to get some definite data on the grassing of the soils of the granite formation of north-west Nelson, 13 acres of bush land in the Murchison district have been taken in hand for experimental grassing, the sowing of the plots being completed in March, 1917. The rotation scheme at the Marton plots and the demonstration work on the gum land at Albany have been continued. Similar work to that undertaken at Albany has been initiated at Purewa, near Whangarei.

No further work has been done on the gum land at Akerama and Kaitaia.

With regard to the immense tract of pumice land extending over the central volcanic plateau of the North Island, and the experimental work on the Taupo, Kaingaroa, and Lichfield plots, matters have remained practically in abeyance since last year. A special report on the possibilities of pumice-land development was submitted in March this year.

Experiments on the forest lands and pakihis of the West Coast of the South Island, and the regrassing trials at Earnscleugh, Central Otago, have been followed up and further observations made.

OTHER SERVICES.

The usual advisory work has been continued, its volume being somewhat reduced, no doubt for reasons arising out of the war. Much work has been done in connection with the development of limestone-deposits. Some attention has been given, by request, to the farms attached to institutions of the Education Department, and proposals submitted for their management. Educational displays were made at the Invercargill, Dunedin, Ashburton, Timaru, Palmerston North, Hawera, and Tapanui winter shows, at the Christchurch, Nelson, Kirwee, and Little River summer shows, and at the Oxford and Kaikoura autumn shows. Special war work in connection with soldiers' settlements, wheat-growing, &c., has required a good deal of attention.

FERTILIZERS.

The number of vendors who have registered brands is 355. During the year nineteen samples were taken for analysis.

RABBIT NUISANCE AND NOXIOUS WEEDS.

The administration of the statutes to control rabbits and noxious weeds comes under the operations of this Division. To successfully administer these demands discretion and energy on the part of the Fields Inspectors entrusted with the work. The assistance and co-operation of the farmers in particular should be extended to these officers, who have often to carry out rather disagreeable duties. Friction is unavoidable, but it is only when forced by necessity that Inspectors resort to prosecution. In every case, however, great discretion is used, and where proceedings are instituted those prosecuted are well warned beforehand of their failure to comply with the conditions of the Acts.

Rabbit Nuisance.

The rabbit nuisance generally is under control in most parts of the Dominion. It is certainly so in all districts where trapping for sale or export does not exist. In those parts where trapping has become a recognized industry control is not so noticeable, and the pest has this season assumed a rather serious aspect. It is certain that many landowners consider trapping and sale of rabbits as a satisfactory means of dealing with them, and the past season has been very favourable for the increase of the pest. This, added to the great outcry of scarcity of labour owing to the war, has tended, especially in Otago and Southland, to let rabbits get out of hand. The excuse that labour was unprocurable has kept the staff very busy endeavouring to get some work done, and officers generally have taken this into consideration and not unduly harassed settlers. Agitation in some quarters was rife that Inspectors were making demands which could not be complied with on account of shortage of labour, but it was found that this appeared to be in many cases only an excuse, as when trapping started more men were available than were blocks to operate on. Much was said about suspending the Act for the duration of the war and putting Inspectors on to "productive work," but it is certain these officers are employed at very useful work in their present occupation if the true interests of the Dominion are to be considered. It should be apparent to all right-thinking farmers and others that if a high state of production is to be maintained the rabbit nuisance must be firmly controlled, because so long as the country continues to export large quantities of frozen or canned rabbits and skins, just so long will the vastly more important export of wool, frozen mutton and meat, and dairy-produce suffer.

It is pleasing to be able to report that the sales of phosphorized pollard from most of the Department's depots has this year greatly increased, showing that the article is appreciated by and has come into favour with farmers, and that they are now recognizing it is the cheapest and most effectual way of dealing with the pest.

Noxious Weeds.

The control of weeds is probably one of the most difficult problems that can be set out for satisfactory administration. Most weeds now coming under the Act had firmly established themselves almost throughout the whole of the Dominion before legislation was provided, so that an