

not merely be continued but expanded. In fact, as suggested by one of our witnesses, a properly equipped scientific station for a searching investigation of grassland problems is urgently needed.

No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between deterioration and depletion; nevertheless, regrassing the latter when complete, and the ground virtually bare and ready for recolonization by plants, appears a far easier proposition than introducing on ground already closely occupied by aggressive, non-palatable plants species of higher palatability suitable to hold their own under fair sheep-grazing.

Coming next to actual details, the proceedings requisite for improvement fall under the three heads—getting rid of rabbits, surface-sowing, and spelling.

(4.) *Getting rid of Rabbits.*

Great unanimity is to be seen in the evidence given by our witnesses regarding the control of rabbits. With but one or two exceptions the witnesses are strongly of opinion that there is one way alone in which rabbits can be reduced to a minimum, or indeed eradicated: this method is by poisoning. On the other hand, trapping is almost universally condemned. With these verdicts we unanimously agree.

Certainly, on minor points there are differences of opinion amongst the many practical men who have given evidence before us. Most look upon what they call "the natural enemy" (*i.e.*, stoats, weasels, ferrets, cats, and hawks) as a valuable adjunct in the destruction of rabbits. Trapping is objected to partly because it is carried out by professional trappers against whose interests it is to reduce the pest, and partly because many stoats, weasels, ferrets, and cats are caught in the traps. Obviously we could make no observations during our inspection of pastures regarding methods for the destruction of rabbits, so can only rely on the unanimity of our witnesses and the experience of some of us.

That rabbits have been greatly reduced in numbers on many sheep-runs may be taken as true. Indeed, it seems that on runs generally, if heroic measures were taken, the pest could be got under.

The following are the methods for the destruction of rabbits that we think most efficacious: (1.) Fencing the lower country into comparatively small areas by means of rabbit-netting. (2.) In order to make the use of netting general we strongly urge the Government either to make it in this country, or to procure it from abroad and sell it at cost price, for cash or on deferred payment, for *bona fide* rabbit-destruction. (3.) Poisoning should be carried on simultaneously by owners of adjoining land. (4.) When rabbits are appreciably reduced by systematic poisoning, that the remainder be got under by means of dogs, ferrets, guns, and digging out. (5.) Protection by law of all natural enemies, and the breeding and liberating of ferrets and cats. (6.) Fumigation, where suitable, should be practised.

(5.) *Surface-sowing.*

In any consideration of a depleted area regarding its regrassing, or the substitution of palatable for unpalatable species on better-grasses pasture, it stands forth clearly that only those methods can be adopted which can be carried out on a remunerative basis. Nor can any one be expected to attempt regrassing or other pasture improvement on a large scale until experience or experiment can be emphatically declared that this or that method properly carried out will succeed. Unfortunately, neither experience nor experiment can yet supply any reliable information regarding regrassing mountain lands. In fact, nearly all the information available is concerned with pastures, or depleted ground, at a low altitude. Thus, from the evidence before us, successful surface-sowing, with but few exceptions, has been carried out at low altitudes, while in Central Otago the same applies with regard to regeneration.

There are, then, but little data available, either from the evidence before us or from our own experience, as to the actual value of surface-sowing at above 1,500 ft. or 2,000 ft. altitude. Judging, however, from the favourable