

to contend with numbers of young rabbits in the late spring and early summer. However, it is pleasing to be able to state that owners generally co-operated very well with the Department's Inspectors, and, generally speaking, there is a very marked improvement in comparison with last year. Inspectors were instructed to bring pressure to bear on occupiers of rabbit-infested areas to carry on destruction work throughout the summer months, and I am certain that the present satisfactory state of the district as regards rabbits is in no small measure due to the very satisfactory work carried out during last summer.

Strychnine and carrots, and strychnine and oats, are the usual methods adopted for poisoning during the winter and spring months. The demand for phosphorized pollard is decreasing year by year in this district. This is no doubt due to the disappointing results obtained from this poison, especially where settlers have to keep harassing the rabbits during the greater part of the year. On areas where rabbits have been reduced to such an extent that all that is required is a thorough poisoning once a year, excellent results are still obtained from the use of phosphorized pollard. During last summer settlers in the Kaikoura, Rotherham, and Amberley districts have gone in for fumigation on a fairly extensive scale with calcium cyanide, cynogas (a crystallized form of calcium cyanide), or carbon bisulphide, and results were highly satisfactory. All the Inspectors report a reduction in rabbits in comparison with last year—in fact, the position generally is undoubtedly much more satisfactory than for many years.

During the year approximately 25,000 lb. of phosphorized pollard were sold from the depots in this district, and approximately 2,500 oz. of strychnine were sold. It may be quite safely stated that at least an equal amount was sold by the local firms dealing in this poison. The amount of carbon bisulphide sold from the depots was slightly over 2,600 lb.

#### DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, WELLINGTON.

The various Rabbit Boards throughout the district continue to do good work, and I am pleased to be able to report a continued reduction in the numbers of the pest in each Board's area. On lands controlled by this Department's Inspectors I am pleased to be able to report a general reduction also, and am in hopes that within the next few years we will have the pest reduced to a minimum throughout the whole district. There is a good deal still to do before this happy condition will be accomplished, but if the reduction continues year by year, and new Boards are formed where rabbits are in evidence, I have every hope of ultimate success being obtained.

#### DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, AUCKLAND.

The condition of the pest may be briefly described as very satisfactory. Reports from every inspectorate in the Auckland Province record a very marked decrease, which, as the result of my personal observations, I am in a position to endorse.

On extensive areas in Waikato where four or five years ago the country was literally alive with rabbits only an occasional one can now be seen, and the rabbit-infested appearance of the country is fast disappearing. Although the present condition of the pest has ceased to be the serious menace of a few years ago, it is recognized that there are still a sufficient number about to again become a very serious problem if given the opportunity. The experience gained by settlers during the war and immediate post-war period is, no doubt, valuable, in that there can be no argument as to the enormous damage which can result from a rabbit-invasion even in the case of closely settled, high-class land. The prevalent contention that rabbits cannot increase to the extent of being a serious menace in such country has been completely exploded, and the experience thus gained should be a sufficient insurance against any serious neglect in controlling the pest in the future.

Although, speaking in general terms, the rabbit nuisance is now well in hand, there are still patches in most of our rabbit-infested districts which require very careful attention. These patches are generally to be found on the poorer-class lands, the owners of which in many cases are financially embarrassed; also on the extensive areas of more or less unoccupied Native lands, which, as a general rule, are overgrown with all manner of weeds and rubbish, providing a sanctuary to the pest which is a perpetual menace to the community.

In the northern peninsula a badly infested area was discovered in the Moengawahine and Maungakahia districts. The main source of supply was located at the head of Moengawahine Valley, on unoccupied "individualized" Native lands. This block, which is fairly extensive, is apparently only partially partitioned, the individual owners in such case being unable to identify their respective holdings. The control of rabbits on this class of country is extremely difficult. However, it is imperative that the rabbits be reduced to a minimum, and means will be found to have the necessary work carried out without delay.

The extensive areas of Crown and unindividualized Native lands situated in the backblocks of Rotorua and Taupo districts are now clearer than they have been for many years, with the exception of a block of approximately 60,000 acres situated in the East Coast Rabbit Board's district east of Rangataiki River. This block is less satisfactory, and was the subject of a special report in March last.

The methods of rabbit-destruction employed here have been similar to those of former years, except that strychnine poison has to a greater extent than before taken the place of phosphorized pollard.

The various Rabbit Boards operating throughout the province continue to do excellent work, and are the subject of favourable reports by Inspectors in charge of all the districts where they are operating. The closer contact between the ratepayers and their Board members is no doubt productive of a personal influence which makes for a greater measure of co-operation and combined action than can result from the efforts of any individual officer.

Sales of phosphorized pollard from Frankton Junction depot show a further decided drop for the year ended 31st March, 1927, as represented by the following comparative table:—

|                                   |    |    | 1926.     | 1927.     |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|-----------|-----------|
| Despatched to Wellington District | .. | .. | 19 tons   | 4½ tons.  |
| Despatched to Auckland District   | .. | .. | 29 "      | 2¾ "      |
| Sales of strychnine               | .. | .. | 1,739 oz. | 1,988 oz. |
| Sales of carbon bisulphide        | .. | .. | 373 gal.  | 379 gal.  |

The increase in sales of strychnine to a certain extent accounts for the decreased demand for phosphorized pollard, but the main reason is to be found in the general diminution in the number of rabbits in the country.

#### NOXIOUS WEEDS.

The Administration of the Noxious Weeds Act has been carried out during the year in an endeavour to effect some improvement in the condition of the weed-infested lands of the Dominion without asking for impossibilities, and, while no doubt some improvement has been effected, the difficulties surrounding the question of noxious weeds do not diminish. Blackberry is admittedly a serious weed and one that constitutes a problem in its control, but it is a question as to whether ragwort is not sometimes a more difficult economic problem on lands where it has taken possession. It was necessary during the year to prosecute occupiers to the number of 202 for failure to carry out the reasonable requests of the Inspectors.