

carrots and strychnine, and oats have been the principal methods adopted for poisoning during the winter, and these were in some instances followed up with a phosphorized-pollard poisoning in the spring. A large number of settlers are also using calcium cyanide or carbon bisulphide for fumigation purposes, especially the former, as it is considered more convenient to handle, and where the work is carried out properly the results are highly satisfactory. A few trappers are still working on areas adjacent to the railway, where the carcasses can conveniently be sent to the city for retail shops, and, as they work through the summer, they are doing good work. The natural enemies are increasing and undoubtedly are of great assistance in keeping the pest in check, more especially in destroying the young rabbits. During the year approximately 14,130 lb. of phosphorized pollard was sold from the Department's depots. The Department, in this district, also sold 2,498 oz. of strychnine and 1,063 lb. of carbon bisulphide.

#### OTAGO—SOUTHLAND DISTRICT.

A further decrease in the state of the rabbit pest all round is apparent—substantially so in many parts. This is also borne out by every Inspector throughout Otago and Southland. There are, however, a few dilatory landowners here and there who do nothing in summer-time, except when forced to by continuous warnings from Inspectors, and at times not until drastic action is taken.

The cold, wet spring and early summer months of 1927 no doubt assisted in the destruction of rabbits to no small degree, as thousands of young nesters were drowned. Up to the end of December rabbits were so few that many landowners were of opinion that the days of the pest were gone. Nevertheless, from the end of December, when weather conditions became ideal, an increase was very soon noticeable, but nothing like what we have seen in the past.

The commercialization of rabbit carcasses and skins is still very much in existence, and although this relieves the landowner from paying out for their destruction at certain times of the year, it has, on the other hand, a great tendency to conserve rabbits for high prices in winter. Therefore the class of summer work carried on in many places is only of a makeshift nature, and this is where landowners fail to rise to the occasion in not paying for the work done, and in not providing for supervision.

The adjournment of rabbit prosecutions in North Otago in particular is not in the interests of the Department's efforts in controlling the rabbit pest; and I feel sure that some landowners take advantage of this, as the time allowed by the Court brings them within the period of good payable skin-prices.

One inspectorate (Ophir) has been cut out during the year, and the adjoining district boundaries (Clyde and Ranfurly) have been adjusted accordingly. The Waiholo District headquarters was transferred to Milton, and an alteration in this and the Dunedin district boundaries has also been made.

Strychnine poisoning is now almost universal; carrots, oats, and apples being used in winter, and strychnined pollard for summer in some districts. The use of phosphorized pollard again shows a decided decrease during the year, which you will note from summary given below. Fumigation of burrows in all low and suitable country continues to give excellent results where well carried out. The use of traps is gradually becoming less prevalent, but they are still too much in evidence. The natural enemy is reported as being on the increase, and is doing great work outside the trapping-area.

Rabbit Boards are four in number. The country under their jurisdiction is gradually improving also.

#### SUMMARY OF RABBIT POISON AND MATERIAL SOLD TO THE PUBLIC, USED ON CROWN LANDS, NATIVE LANDS, AND RAILWAY-LINES FOR 1926-27 AND 1927-28.

| Article.                      | Sold.    |          | Crown Lands. |          | Railway-lines. |          | Native Lands. |          |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|--------------|----------|----------------|----------|---------------|----------|
|                               | 1926-27. | 1927-28. | 1926-27.     | 1927-28. | 1926-27.       | 1927-28. | 1926-27.      | 1927-28. |
| Phosphorized pollard (pounds) | 52,937   | 21,129   | 2,390        | 2,009    | 3,107          | 2,054    | 144           | 60       |
| Phosphorized oats (pounds) .. | 2,861    | 2,435    | 200          | 92       | 141            | 11       | 31            | ..       |
| Bisulphide (pounds) ..        | 26       | 106      | 497          | 309      | 812            | 943      | 8             | 49       |
| Phosphorus (pounds) ..        | 69       | 117      | ..           | ..       | ..             | ..       | ..            | ..       |
| Strychnine (ounces) ..        | 6,510    | 6,297    | 36           | 4        | ..             | ..       | 2             | ..       |
| Cartridges (number) ..        | ..       | ..       | 740          | 130      | ..             | ..       | ..            | ..       |
| Calcium cyanide (pounds) ..   | ..       | ..       | ..           | 12½      | ..             | 7½       | ..            | ..       |

#### NOXIOUS WEEDS.

The control and eradication of noxious weeds is a problem which faces the Department and settlers in practically all farming districts throughout the Dominion. Some weeds are spread over large areas, and the prevention of their further spread calls for ever-increasing vigilance.

During the year representations have been made on the one hand urging the Department to administer the Noxious Weeds Act more strictly, while on the other hand complaints are made by the occupiers of infested land that the requirements of the Department are excessive and unreasonable. Officers are thus frequently involved in situations of a most difficult nature. To strictly enforce the Act in certain cases many settlers would be forced to leave their holdings; nevertheless sheer neglect would mean a serious menace to neighbouring occupiers. Cases of this nature are by no means few, and are a constant anxiety to the Inspector as well as to the occupiers.

A matter of frequent comment is the so-called neglect of the Government to clear weed-infested Crown and Native lands. In reply to this criticism, it can be affirmed that a certain amount of clearing of these lands is done every year, and the money available is spent where permanent results are likely to be obtained—for example, on lands only slightly affected, or on lands where the weeds are liable to spread to clean and occupied adjacent country. It would be futile to attempt to clear great areas of weed-infested Crown lands which are inaccessible and likely to remain unoccupied and unproductive for an indefinite period. Expenditure on this class of country would be a waste of public money.

Probably the weed which, on the whole, gives most trouble is blackberry, and investigations are still proceeding in order to discover an effective and practicable way of eradicating this weed. The use of the common goat for clearing land infested with blackberry is a distinct success, and an article