

The quality of the wool offered at the sales was on the whole up to the average, and apparently met all the varied requirements of the respective purchasing countries.

The Department's instructional work on wool improvement lines was continued during the year, and numerous demonstrations and lantern lectures were given throughout the Dominion. In addition, wool samples were examined microscopically for hairy fibres, and reports made to the owners. Unfortunately the Department suffered a severe loss in the sudden death on 31st January last of Mr. J. G. Cook, Wool Instructor. Steps have been taken to fill the vacancy thus created.

RABBIT NUISANCE.

The condition of the rabbit pest generally shows some improvement over that of last year, despite the fact that in most districts the weather during the spring and summer was not favourable for poisoning operations. A good deal of the rabbit-suppression work is now carried out by Rabbit Boards, but during the past year where Boards are not operating a number of local committees were set up to work under the Unemployment Board's scheme for supplying subsidized labour for rabbit-destruction purposes. Reports indicate that these rabbit committees where properly organized have operated with decidedly beneficial results.

The various Rabbit Boards have worked successfully throughout the year, and Board control is meeting with such general favour that several new Boards have been constituted under the Act.

The keeping of Angora rabbits for industrial purposes is practically abandoned, and very few rabbitries are now in existence.

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

Reports from various districts indicate that noxious weeds on the whole have been reasonably well controlled. In some districts a definite improvement is reported as far as ragwort is concerned, due to the increasing use of sodium chlorate and the grazing of sheep. Unfortunately, however, this weed still has a strong hold in some areas of the country, and after several years of clearing little progress is apparent. It is the Department's intention to adopt special measures for the clearance of ragwort next season in some of the worst affected districts of the North Island.

Variegated thistle is causing concern in certain North Island areas, particularly in East Coast districts of the Island where this weed has spread considerably during recent years. Measures for its clearance are to be more strictly enforced with the co-operation of local authorities.

Blackberry and gorse are still present in abundance in certain areas, and flame throwers have been tried as a method of clearance.

Sweet briar appears to be increasing in portions of the South Island, and is proving a most difficult plant to subdue. Experiments with various preparations were carried out on this weed during the past two years, without very satisfactory results, except that in one instance sodium chlorate crystals applied to the roots during April and May proved effective.

Californian thistle and other noxious weeds have received attention, and while in many instances occupiers have co-operated with the Department in arranging clearance there is a strange apathy in many cases which allows the weeds to get a strong hold and makes eradication more difficult.

As in the past, the Department has carried out considerable clearing of weeds on unoccupied Crown lands and unindividualized Native lands adjoining or near to farming lands.

Fifteen counties have so far taken advantage of the power given them under the 1934 amendment to the Noxious Weeds Act to assume control of the administration of the Act within their areas.

STAFF.

To the staff as a whole I desire to again express my appreciation of their assistance so loyally and efficiently given during the year.
