

This, of course, would inevitably have led to spread on to new country, and this result was not only imminent but had actually started.

Some thar have spread along the main divide across the heads of the Dobson and Hopkins Valleys, while one small colony was encountered in the Rangitata watershed.

Thar and chamois can traverse ice-bound rocks where men cannot follow, and a few of the Rangitata colony escaped, but it is hoped to get the remainder next season.

A total of 2,765 thar were killed, and a termination of the menace these animals constituted is, it is thought, already in sight. This, it is considered, is a most successful conclusion to this arduous and hazardous phase of this season's campaign.

Partly as the result of the tenacity with which the thar retained possession of the major portion of the Mount Cook lands and also owing to the great natural increase and low mortality-rate of their own number, chamois were some years ago compelled to migrate elsewhere and they have been encountered as far north as Lewis Pass, although they are in very small numbers to the north of Arthur's Pass.

The extent to which this northward migration has taken place is revealed by the fact that over eleven hundred were killed in the heads of the Rangitata watershed but, at the same time, the fact that 1,658 were killed at Mount Cook shows that many still remained in the vicinity of the place of liberation of the progenitors of to-day's herds.

Although the position with regard to chamois infestation is serious, this season's activities have, it is thought, gone a long way towards checking the spread, aside from the improvement in growth of vegetation which will undoubtedly take place in the Mount Cook reserves and the Rangitata, and there is reason to believe that effective control will eventually be effected.

It is also hoped that it will be found that the decimation of the numbers of both thar and chamois at Mount Cook will result, as is the case with deer, in "stragglers" now inhabiting other localities returning to their old haunts and so being dealt with in an accessible locality.

By the end of another season much more will be known of this subject and the degree of progress will be made more definable.

(b) *Deer*.—On some of the country worked this season operations have not previously been conducted; another large area had not been worked for five years, and the remainder for three years.

In all places previously worked, however, it was found that a degree of the progress previously made had still been maintained, although much had been lost by the unduly long time which had been allowed to elapse without operations.

During this season on one station ("St. James") a total of 3,670 deer were killed, and the benefit to the sheep pastures is already indicated by the fact that the owner has been able to increase his sheep by about one thousand head, and it is considered that the increased feed available would permit of a further large addition to the flock.

A very pleasing development as the result of earlier departmental operations and one which indicates the efficacy of the policy of directing activities, especially against remote sources of reinfestation of surrounding areas, is the fact that in some localities which were at one time being constantly invaded by deer the animals are now scarce, although in some cases operations have actually never been conducted in such localities, but the hinterland has been subjected to intensive operations.

Personnel.

Although an abundance of men were offering for service with the parties, difficulty was again experienced in obtaining sufficient experienced men.

The rigorous conditions encountered, especially in Westland, resulted in many men leaving the parties after only very short service. As an indication of this there might be mentioned one valley where, although it was desired to have only two men operating there, a total of eleven men were sent there and, even then, one man was entirely alone for over half the season. Great credit is due to this man for his tenacity and disregard of hardships and for the manner in which he carried on in spite of losing his mate and being left alone time after time.

Further credit is due to all those who "stuck it out" on the Westland side, owing to the fact that, in addition to more severe weather conditions and more bush and rougher country, they were able to get only such poor results that their earnings were very much lower than those of the men who were fortunate enough to be engaged on the eastern side.

It is gratifying to be again able to report the absence of any loss of life or serious injury to any of the employees, which, in view of the hazardous nature of the work and of the fact that every year several fatal shooting and other accidents occur amongst deer-stalkers and mountaineers, is especially noteworthy.

Deer-skins.

There is a very keen demand for deer-skins, and at times the Department has had difficulty in filling orders received. The total number of skins sold during the year was 12,555.

Private commercial hunters have continued to save skins, and in many cases have sold them to this Department. Skins handled from this source numbered 1,699.

WILD PIGS ON POOR KNIGHTS ISLANDS.

During the year it was decided to send an official party to the Poor Knights Islands with a view to exterminating the wild pigs on those islands.

The operations were completely successful, a total of ten pigs, the total pig population of the Islands, being destroyed.

It is intended to arrange a further visit to the islands when opportunity offers with a view to ascertaining the degree of recovery of the flora and fauna of the islands.