

muster from the outside country?—I have had the run divided into four blocks. A portion of the back block is not fenced; the other run is fenced off and divided into two blocks, irrespective of the reserve.

181. Roughly, how many acres?—About half the run is completely in paddocks.

182. That is, about fifty thousand acres securely fenced?—Yes.

183. Free from being broken?—Some fences are broken by the snow. It is a rough and high country. Some fences on the ridges are broken down.

184. Have you been stopped from breeding?—Yes; we were stopped last year from putting in rams.

185. Are there any wild rams there?—There are some that come from the Crown lands; but we kill them as far as we can. We have men engaged destroying these wild sheep on the Crown lands now.

186. You say you work these three blocks together?—Yes.

187. Would it not lessen your risk of scab being perpetuated if you worked the runs from different centres, instead of ever massing your sheep together?—We are obliged to do the shearing across the range; it is a high range; there is no possibility of avoiding it. We have lost no less than eighteen pack-horses within thirty-four months; that is the only means of access we have.

188. Have there been no sheep shorn except on the reserve?—There is no other way across.

189. You say it is not possible to shear on the runs themselves?—No, inasmuch as we cannot pack sufficient. There is no timber in this country; the tracks are very high and dangerous.

190. Do other runholders make use of this reserve?—No; it is held under lease, the same as the other runs.

191. You consider that section 23 bears unfairly on the sheepowners, inasmuch as it fines them, notwithstanding their having done all that the department wished them to do?—There is no man but wishes to cure his sheep if he can; more especially when he spends enormous sums of money for that purpose. I should have been rid of it long ago if it had not been for these Crown lands.

192. Do you know of instances where scab had returned in spite of all the sheepowners could do in securing their boundaries?—My neighbour, Mr. Bullen, has been for fourteen years cleaning his country, with ample means. We have been doing all we can in every way. It will take longer to do it in a rough country like that of mine.

193. You speak of cases where the sheepowner complies with all the requirements of the Inspector; how would it be possible for the Inspector to be satisfied that every sheep was mustered; in other words, how can the Inspector be satisfied that the sheepowner has done his utmost in the way of mustering his sheep to clean them? Would he not be dependent on the sheepowner's assurance: if that is so, what value can you attach to the sheepowners having assured the Inspector that everything was done which was required?—There may be cases of men being so stupid as not to use every means for their own interest to stamp the scab out; but men who know their business will use every effort for that purpose. Every one must see that the Inspector is doing his duty, and must approve of his doing it.

194. If, as I put it, the Inspector is dependent on the sheepowner's assurance, does it not follow that the Inspector can be sure of nothing, except by judging of results, as to whether every effort has been made or not?—It would be impossible for the Inspector to be at every dip. As a rule, they are going about the runs in our neighbourhood continually inspecting sheep and seeing what is going on.

195. Do you mean to tell the Committee that the Inspector can satisfy himself as to any sheep that has been got in, or of the actual dipping of every sheep from first to last?—It would be impossible, unless he were on the ground always.

196. And then could he?—I think a practical man could. He could not follow the shepherds, but if the sheepowner paid good wages he could secure trustworthy shepherds.

197. He would not follow the shepherds?—We are all in the hands of the shepherds for that.

198. You have said that men might be ruined, and then the country would remain scabby, no good being done?—Yes, quite so. It is far better to see that the owners of runs are doing their utmost towards cleaning their flocks. By aiding them in every way the Government would be doing its duty.

199. Did you not mention that insufficient capital was in many cases the cause?—Yes; there are some owners that have not the means of doing more than they are doing.

200. In the event of some of these men with insufficient capital being ruined, is it not likely that they would be succeeded by men with sufficient capital?—It is a very rough country. Many would not take runs there. It would require very large sums to clean that country.

201. I do not think you have answered my question exactly. I will put it again: In the event of some of these men with insufficient capital being ruined, is it not likely there will be men of sufficient capital to succeed them?—I know this, that, with my experience, if I had double the value of some of the scabby runs, I would keep the money, and not invest in those scabby runs.

202. *Hon. Capt. Fraser.*] When did the Government lease this shearing reserve, to whom, and for what period?—I cannot tell off-hand: the lease is for fourteen years.

203. To whom?—To Mr. Joseph Ward.

204. For a period of fourteen years?—Yes.

205. When did they first lease it?—I do not know the date; there are four years to run, so that it is ten years ago. I do not know the exact date.

206. *Hon. Mr. Waterhouse.*] As I understand it, your sheep, or a portion of them, have been running on land that has not been substantially fenced?—Yes; there is a portion that we are now fencing.

207. Has any information been laid against you for allowing sheep to run on unfenced land?—Only six sheep, as I have mentioned, strayed away in three years.