

348. Will you state the different means of destroying rabbits that you are aware of?—Phosphorized grain is our principal means. It is the only thing we have to depend upon, chiefly in the winter time. Many people trap, a few use dogs, others try poisoning with carrots, others fumigating by sulphide of carbon, and in some places they dig. Others use wire-netting fencing, and others again turn out natural enemies.

349. What do you recommend as the most efficacious?—Decidedly a thoroughly systematic poisoning in winter. That is undoubtedly the sheet-anchor of the whole thing. Where wire-netting can be resorted to that is the next best thing. Summer-poisoning is so uncertain. Occasionally you may do a little with it; but it wholly depends on the weather. In trapping you certainly kill a good many, but you destroy the natural enemy at the same time.

350. I suppose you have to adopt different methods according to the ground?—Yes.

351. You have had some experience in introducing both ferrets and stoats?—Ferrets, stoats, and weasels.

352. Which do you consider the best?—Well, I have one case in mind where the first weasels were turned out. It was on a peninsula on the Wanaka Lake, of eight thousand acres in extent. There were seventy-two turned out. It was all poisoned the first year with the exception of two spurs, on which they were liberated. Last year it was patch-poisoned, and that year I visited it myself. I saw very few rabbits on the patch I went over. This year it has not been poisoned at all, and I have a report saying that, with the exception of the far end, there are no rabbits.

353. That is the result of the weasels?—Yes.

354. Do you think the weasels have increased?—That we cannot tell.

355. You cannot form an opinion?—No. With regard to the country I have mentioned, the rabbits, of course, were confined to this peninsula.

356. And the experiment was a success?—Yes, so far as that place is concerned.

357. In regard to the stoats?—They were so few in number that I could not speak positively as to what the effect has been. At the same time, rabbits have been found, evidently killed by them. A good number of them have been found.

358. And what is your experience of the ferrets?—To do any good they require to be turned out in large numbers, and you require to have a supply always on hand to keep turning out. They are more delicate than the others.

359. You had several breeding-stations for ferrets?—Yes.

360. Where are they?—We have one now at Waimata.

361. Before turning the ferrets out do you try to acclimatize them?—We harden them, and they are generally sent to some place where rabbits are procurable, and where they are kept in an open yard, rabbits being turned among them.

362. So that they can get used to killing the rabbits?—Yes; and they are fed on nothing else for some time before being turned out.

363. Are you importing any animals at present?—None.

364. And you have only this one breeding-station?—That is all.

365. And you have only ferrets there?—That is all. That breeding-station was principally for the purpose of having ferrets to turn out on the Napier boundary. We had others, but they were dispensed with because it was found cheaper to buy the animals.

366. If that is the case, surely private individuals would give up breeding, and your supplies would cease?—No: there is an arrangement that all ferrets offered for sale are bought at a certain price.

367. Where do these ferrets come from?—They are bred under certain conditions, under the supervision of the Inspector.

368. They are not caught?—No.

369. I believe that ferrets have been caught and sold in that way?—Any number of them. Runholders down south have bought them at 4s. and 5s. a head, because they could get them at that figure; and consequently there was quite a trade springing up.

370. Do you think that the ferret, weasel, and stoat will flourish in different parts of the colony alike?—No.

371. State what your experience leads you to think on the subject?—In the southern portions of the colony, in the high, rough, cold portions of Otago, I believe weasels and stoats would undoubtedly be the animal there. The ferrets, no doubt, do good there, and have been increasing in a portion of Southland. In the warmer parts of the colony I think the ferret would do very well, and has done very well, especially if there is any water for it. If the country is too dry it does no good.

372. Are there any breeding establishments for weasels and stoats?—No; it is impossible to breed them.

373. Then you have made no provision for a supply of these weasels and stoats?—The only means is by importation.

374. And the Government are not importing them?—I hear that the shipping company refuse to bring any more.

375. Then the importing of them does not rest with you?—No.

376. And you have not had definite information that they will not bring out any more?

*Hon. Mr. Buckley:* It is a fact: they will not.

377. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Then I suppose we must rely upon ferrets?—Yes.

378. You say that the Government buy all the ferrets that are offered for sale. Can you state what number are purchased every year?—I cannot—my returns are not yet in; but I can give you that information in a few days.

379. What do you do with the ferrets the Government have bought?—We turn them out in different places on the waste lands of the Crown, and on Crown lands.