

effect that the agent was not doing his duty in regard to a certain piece of country below Wyndham.

517. The complaint was against the agents?—Yes, that he was taking no notice of it.

518. You had reports from various parts of the country in respect to rabbits in September last?—I had.

519. What was the general tenor of the reports?—That the rabbits were largely reduced in numbers everywhere.

520. Reduced more than usual at the end of the winter?—Less than the previous winter.

521. By what means would you propose to keep the rabbits under in summer?—The natural enemy is supposed to keep them under if kept in sufficient numbers, backed up by energetic measures in winter.

522. Suppose the weasels you turned out on the peninsula had been turned out on country where they could wander about, would you urge the owners of land to trap and fumigate, and so forth?—I do not think I should compel him to trap or fumigate, if I saw him turning out the natural enemy in sufficient numbers, but I would urge him to shoot and take other means.

523. What other means?—I do not think you could possibly use any other means without destroying the natural enemy.

524. You have stated that more remedies are wanted. Is that in the direction of other poisons?—Yes, and not alone that, but to see if we could not get some scientist to introduce some disease in rabbits, so as to destroy them wholesale.

525. Do you see any difficulty in keeping the rabbits under chiefly by poisoning?—That could be done.

526. The difficulty of exterminating the rabbits applies rather to the high country?—Yes.

527. What do you consider the best remedy to deal with rabbits there?—I have seen millions of acres of country where there is no hope but the natural enemy.

528. And you think those that we have are the best?—I think so.

529. In selecting those natural enemies, do you take into consideration the possibility that by-and-by, when they have multiplied, and exterminated the rabbits, they may become as great a nuisance as the rabbits?—If they destroy the rabbits they must necessarily cease to exist themselves. You can destroy them in many ways not applicable to rabbits.

530. Would these natural enemies have any special value, so as to induce men to destroy them?—The stoat would.

531. Then, would it not be advisable to encourage those animals which would be an object of commerce after the rabbits are killed down?—Yes.

532. The stoat is one; the marten is another?—Yes.

533. Would there be any difficulty in getting them from California?—I do not know.

534. Is there any animal that might be imported which would be of value in destroying rabbits on high mountain country? Have you had any experience of the golden eagle in destroying mountain-hares?—I think there would be an objection to that; they would destroy the sheep.

535. *Mr. Lance.*] I understood you to say that, when an Inspector gives notice to an owner to destroy rabbits, he leaves it to the owner to select any means that he may please. Is that absolutely so?—It is, so far as my experience goes, and so far as the instructions issued by the department are concerned.

536. Have you any complaint, especially coming from Otago, that the Inspectors insist on rabbiters being employed in large numbers, and that, unless they are employed, they lay informations in the Magistrate's Court?—I have heard of one place in the South, but I have no evidence that such was the case. I do not think the Inspectors would attempt to do anything of the sort.

537. I have heard it has been a great source of complaint in Otago that they were compelled by the department to put on rabbiters, and that these destroy ferrets, and therefore it is no use to put on ferrets?—I have heard of it, but, unless there is a distinct complaint, it is impossible to lay down a decided course of action.

538. You are aware of the increase of rabbits in the Amuri District?—I am.

539. A witness stated yesterday that the Rabbit Act had been suspended in that part of the country?—That is the first time I have heard of it.

540. It is proposed that a fence shall be put there. Of course in Canterbury we have no rabbits at the present time, and are much afraid of being invaded. Do you think a wire-fence would be beneficial?—I certainly do think so, at that particular spot. You have a line there where you can put a fence.

541. You said that in the North Island rabbits only existed in the Wairarapa?—I hardly said that. I know they are in existence in the Waikato and Auckland, too. About Alexandra, I am informed, they are extending in great numbers from Te Awamutu and Kihikihi, and there is great danger of their spreading into the King country, unless immediate steps are taken. I heard of this about two years ago, and went over the land, and I saw it was confined to a very small area, and my own opinion is that they never can increase there to the extent that people anticipate. Cats are there by hundreds, and the population where the rabbits are now is so great that they ought to be exterminated at once. There is one place about Raglan that might be a little difficult to deal with.

542. Then, in regard to the Act, you think, on the whole, it works well, and you would not recommend local bodies or trustees?—I should not.

543. Do you think the system of trustees would work well in the Amuri District?—Where the interest in the question is confined to a very few, there, I believe, it would work; but where it is spread over a number of small owners I do not think it would work so well.

544. But you have heard no complaints from private owners about the working of the Act, and none from the Inspectors. How is it, then, that the department has not been able to cope with