

an increased area to be dealt with next year all round. If it were found that the natural enemy in those particular districts had the effects you would not require wire-fencing.

839. I suppose you have read Mr. Bayly's report?—I have only glanced it through this morning.

840. He says, "I am satisfied no scheme has been propounded which will effectually deal with the question." Do you believe that?—I do not know what schemes have been propounded.

841. I would call your attention to the experience of Mr. Bullen's run?—Ferrets and poisoning have been decidedly successful there.

841A. In that case, then, you would not agree with such a dictum as laid down here?—It is simply a matter of degree as to the measures taken, for it has been abundantly proved that natural enemies and poisoning will effectually clear the country of rabbits.

842. You have heard of rabbits being turned into a ferret-box and the ferrets not touching them?—I was told by a thorough breeder of ferrets at Kaikoura that he had done it. I have no doubt it was a fact.

843. You did not inquire whether they were buck-ferrets or indiscriminately male and female?—No.

844. What would be the position of the Inspector if, after issuing an order to kill the rabbits, and from bad grain or other cause the rabbits were not killed?—He would say that the order had not been carried out efficiently.

845. *Mr. Fulton.*] How is the Act working among the small agricultural settlers in the Kaikoura?—Fairly well. We have given them orders to destroy rabbits ever since the Act was in force, but it is only recently that we have found it necessary to proceed further. The great point they make is regarding the wording of one of the clauses—"If in the opinion of the Inspector there shall still be rabbits;" and I believe Judge Richmond laid it down that the opinion of the Inspector cannot be upset.

846. Do they complain that the rabbits are driven on to their farms from the adjacent country?—Yes.

847. From the adjacent high country?—No; I do not think there is any complaint of that sort.

848. *Captain Russell.*] Why is it necessary to keep constantly turning out supplies of ferrets if they breed well?—Because they are delicate, and perish from the climate.

849. You think, therefore, they would never become a nuisance if the rabbits were killed out?—Yes.

850. There is no danger of their becoming a nuisance as the rabbits are now?—I do not think they would become a nuisance. In any case they would be very easily dealt with.

851. You spoke of cats being valuable natural enemies?—They do a great deal of destruction among young rabbits. Old cats will bring young rabbits to their kittens night after night. The best way to turn out cats is to get a she-cat that has just kittened, take her out to a colony of rabbits and feed her two or three times in a box, and the young ones grow up wild.

852. Have you thought out the principal lines where you would recommend putting the wire-netting fences?—I cannot say I have. It would be necessary for two or three practical men to go over the country with the owners.

853. It would be necessary for local Boards of Advice with powers of administration to decide where these fences should go?—I think so.

854. Do you find that the owners are taking more interest in the subject of rabbit administration than years ago?—Yes, from necessity.

855. Their pockets are being touched?—Yes.

856. Do you imagine that the elective Boards under present circumstances would be more efficient than formerly?—I had no experience of them under the 1881 Act. I have not thought out the matter of Boards minutely.

857. You think the desire would be to make the Act, however stringent, work well?—I think so.

858. Supposing the Board system to be adopted, would it be wise to exempt all the very small owners from rates, and allow the election to be made from owners, say, of above five hundred sheep?—I should certainly exempt the owners of flocks under five hundred from taxation.

859. Would it be regarded as a hardship by the small owners not to have a vote in the Boards?—I should think not.

860. Would it be possible for the Inspector to be *ex officio* chairman of a Board of Advice?—I have hardly thought that out.

861. *Mr. Lance.*] Am I right in supposing that you are of opinion that, if a really vigorous policy in regard to this rabbit question, combined with considerable expenditure, were carried out, the rabbits would be reduced to such a minimum that they would practically cease to be a pest to the country?—There is such a possibility, undoubtedly, and I believe it can be done.

862. It appears that the Colonial Secretary's department has no power to deal with reserves and unoccupied lands. Supposing the department was transferred to the Land Department, and these lands were put into occupation by somebody, would that be an assistance in putting the Act in force?—It would be an assistance to have the lands occupied, so that the Inspector could have somebody to go upon, undoubtedly; but it might be difficult to induce people to take up these lands.

WEDNESDAY, 9TH JUNE, 1886.

Inspector FOSTER further examined.

863. *Mr. Lance.*] I should like to ask the witness to tell the Committee in a few words what measures he would propose to adopt in order to keep rabbits substantially in check in the colony?—First of all I should encourage the breeding of natural enemies in every possible way, and devise a system of wire-netting fences, wherever practicable, for the assistance of the natural enemies. I think I have already stated in my evidence my opinion in regard to this subject.