

1211. Do you travel yourself?—I am always travelling from one district to another.

1212. Have you any system that you carry out?—I am very much guided by circumstances. There is no cut-and-dried period for visiting different parts of the district. My time is taken up in the administration of the Act. One of the most important things is to have the Act well administered—that is, to insure people doing the work of eradicating the rabbits.

1213. You are also Inspector under the Sheep Act: does that take up much of your time?—It does at certain times of the year, such as sending out schedules and getting returns in. For about four or five months it gives us a great deal of work.

1214. Have you frequent applications for certificates for travelling sheep from one district to another?—No; our district being a clean district, certificates are not required.

1215. Then, if sheep travel from Southland to Otago?—They do not get a certificate. Sheep coming from Canterbury are inspected at the Waitaki.

1216. You have nothing to do with that, I suppose?—I have nothing whatever to do with it.

1217. How many agents have you in your district?—I have three agents under me.

1218. What is their duty?—To go round and see the state of the various holdings; and if they see rabbits are manifesting themselves in any numbers they report to me. Then I go there myself, in order that I may be able to prove it from the witness-box in Court, if necessary. Then notices are issued under the Act to clear the place.

1219. Who appoints these agents?—They were appointed by me, subject to the approval of the Government.

1220. You have authority to appoint whom you choose?—I ask for authority, and I have always obtained it.

1221. You have to submit the name first?—Yes, for the approval of the Government.

1222. If you were dissatisfied with an agent could you dismiss him at once?—I would; although I am aware, though it has not been so in my district, agents have been forced back after dismissal.

1223. In choosing an individual, how are you guided?—I select the man who is most suitable. He must be a sober man, and possess a knowledge of the country. Local knowledge is very essential.

1224. You have not turned out any natural enemies?—I turned out about three hundred and sixty ferrets. For the last two or three years we have turned them out on the Crown lands adjacent to large Crown forests.

1225. Why near the forests?—Because they are better protected there from the operations of rabbiters.

1226. I should have thought you would have turned them out where the rabbits were?—There are generally a good many about the edges of bushes. We turn the ferrets out where we are sure they can get their livelihood.

1227. Have you turned out any weasels or stoats?—Not any stoats.

1228. Have you had any experience of them?—I have not.

1229. You could not say whether they are likely to prove beneficial?—Only from common report. I think it is a speculation.

1230. Have the ferrets you turned out increased?—They are increasing very fast, and spreading over the country.

1231. And doing good?—We are not in a position to speak of the actual good they have done. Both the agents and myself are of opinion that the young rabbits were not quite so numerous last year where the ferrets were known to be plentiful, and we take it from that that they must do some good.

1232. Have you complaints about the ferrets?—They are not popular in my district—the people do not like them.

1233. I see there has been a meeting at Thornbury?—They have been very much opposed to them there always. But we do not turn them out amongst the settlers: it is only in the outlying country we liberate them.

1234. Have you many unoccupied lands in your district?—Yes; there are a great number of small reserves. There are no unoccupied runs in my district except one, at the present time.

1235. Do you deal with all these lands where there are rabbits?—The department takes charge of those lands under section 11 of the Rabbit Act.

1236. Have you done much in the way of killing rabbits upon them?—A great deal. We poison them thoroughly by contract and day-wages, and in the most economical way to the owners. We make a claim on the owners for all expenses. For harbour endowments we claim on the Harbour Boards, for Borough Council endowments we claim on Borough Councils, and so on. We have no difficulty. They prefer that the Inspectors should deal with these lands direct—we can do it so much more cheaply than they can, and probably more satisfactorily to them.

1237. There is no complaint in the district as to these reserves?—No direct complaint has come to my knowledge.

1238. Do you take any steps in the summer months for killing rabbits?—We do: wherever we find that rabbits are coming in from unoccupied Crown lands, or where they are likely to damage the adjoining settlers, we employ labour.

1239. In what way?—Chiefly by trapping and ferreting. There are a lot of expert trappers in the district, and we employ them by contract for a period. We let all our contracts for a length of time. It is important to do that. We never contract for one poisoning; we contract for three, six, and twelve months.

1240. Why is it better to make a long contract?—It keeps the people on the ground.

1241. If they poisoned out all the rabbits they would lose their billet?—Their work has got to be passed by the Inspector, and no work no pay.

1242. And how do you ascertain?—By inspection. I go myself at different times over the district.