

1299. Are there counterbalancing disadvantages to the proposal to introduce the eagle?—I do not know of any. I do not think they would be likely to injure the young lambs.

1300. So long as they found rabbits and keas in high country, would they be likely to descend to the lower to attack sheep?—I do not think so.

1301. *Mr. Dodson.*] What effect would poisoned rabbit have on the eagles?—I am afraid it would destroy the eagles; but there are very few hawks that are killed by eating poisoned rabbits, because they do not eat the intestines.

1302. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] That is, phosphorus poison?—Yes.

1303. Strychnine would go through everything?—Yes.

1304. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Do you think it would be a good thing to make a wire-netting fence a legal fence, so that contributions towards it could be levied upon adjoining owners?—I do not think it would have the desired effect. Where there was a large area enclosed by wire-netting there would be a failure to destroy them inside that area in the first instance, and I do not think it would be worth the cost.

1305. Not in the case of small holdings?—A private owner can certainly protect himself against rabbits by wire-netting and proper and continuous surveillance.

1306. But you think he should do that at his own expense?—That is my opinion. In my district there is a large firm who put up about thirty-five miles of wire-netting with a view of destroying their own rabbits inside and keeping back their neighbours'; but it was found that floods and fires and so forth damaged it, and they very soon abandoned the fence. It was so much money lost to them.

1307. It seems to me that the persons who put up this fence did so unadvisedly. Is "Castle Rock" in your district?—No; it adjoins.

1308. Can you state what has been done there in fencing?—They have done a large amount; and another property adjoining them has been encircled very successfully—that of Rowley and Hamilton—and they may be said to have solved the difficulty so far as the wire-netting is concerned and the subjugation of the rabbits. They have brought up the carrying-capacity of their country from seven thousand to about eighteen thousand, which was the stock it was carrying before the rabbits became a nuisance. I know wire-netting can be made a success within certain limits.

1309. The question arises, if wire-netting would be efficacious, should not assistance be given to small holders for the purpose of erecting it?—In the agricultural centres of Southland I do not believe that two hundred pounds' worth of cropping was damaged last year, the rabbits had been so well kept down.

Addendum.

The rabbit agents should be, in my opinion, entirely under the control of the Inspector, with power to dismiss without reference to Government. This is reasonable when it is considered that an Inspector is so dependent on the integrity of an agent, both as regards the agent's relations to the public and his being faithful to his Inspector. Upon the correctness and the promptitude of his reports much of the successful working of the Rabbit Act will depend. On the contrary, if the agent is found to be acting in a manner against the Inspector, or doing his duty in a perfunctory manner, he is, in that case, worse than useless—often shielding himself behind the Inspector and sympathizing with the wrongdoers. I have not personally experienced these drawbacks, but have heard of them in other districts.—A. A. M.

Mr. BRYDENE examined.

1310. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have you had much experience in the matter of rabbits?—Yes.

1311. In what part of the colony?—In the Waitaki District.

1312. Not all in one block?—No; we have got runs and freeholds extending over most of Otago.

1313. What quantity of freehold and what quantity of leasehold?—I superintend something like two hundred thousand acres of leasehold, and about one hundred and fifty thousand acres of freehold.

1314. And you have rabbits over all?—No; on some of the freeholds there are no rabbits.

1315. Would you speak more particularly about the properties on which you have rabbits?—We have a freehold property in Southland, which now extends to about fifty thousand acres, on which we have had the rabbits for the last eight or ten years.

1316. And have you rabbits on the whole of the leaseholds?—Yes.

1317. Are the rabbits very bad in any part of it?—There are three places where they are very bad—one, in the Queenstown District, of about a hundred thousand acres.

1318. Is that along the bank of the lake?—It is opposite Cromwell. We have another one between Shag Valley and the Taieri River of about forty-four thousand acres, on which there are rabbits; and one on the Waitaki of about forty thousand acres.

1319. Is that high up?—No. It is a place called Kowrow, just at the extremity of the railway.

1320. The rabbits are a great nuisance on all these places?—Yes. On the Queenstown run during the last two years we have spent about £7,000; and we collected skins there the year before last to the number of 244,000, and this year to 283,000.

1321. Then the rabbits have increased?—I would not like to say they have increased; but we got some new country there very rabbit, and we did not get them thoroughly killed the first year. I think it was because we were more successful last year than the previous one; and we have been killing all last summer, which has been adding to the number. The rabbits trapped and shot are