

introduce a stoat into New Zealand. They can be bought in any number at Home for 5s. each, and brought out more cheaply than ferrets. I had an offer to supply me with as many as I chose at 5s. in England.

1491. And what is the expense of bringing them out?—In quantities, I imagine they could be brought out for 10s. each.

1492. Have you any objection to name the agent who would supply you at Home with the animals at that figure?—He was the gamekeeper of the Earl of Yarborough's estate, in Lincolnshire. The Earl does not allow trapping for foxes—he is a sportsman; and consequently there are a great many stoats there. I had the offer through the man in London who sent me out the particular stoats for which I paid 5s. each.

1493. Do you not think that these animals, being the natives of a cold climate, would be much better adapted for New Zealand, especially for the high country, than the ferret, which is the native of a warmer climate?—The ferret is a domestic animal. The nearest animal to it is the polecat. I am decidedly of opinion that in Otago the ferret is not going to be a useful animal for breeding and increasing naturally. The stoat and weasel, however, will do so.

1494. Do you approve of wire-netting for boundary fences?—All my experience of wire-netting shows me that where it has been put up on rough country it has been abandoned. On farms it is an excellent remedy. I have seen it tried and abandoned generally on runs.

1495. In settled districts would you advocate its being made a legal fence, with ordinary wire?—I should like to see it done, but I am afraid it would be very oppressive in the case of small, struggling farmers. It would, no doubt, serve a good purpose.

1496. Are you of opinion that, in order to encourage the destruction of rabbits, the Government should give a bonus of, say, 1d. on shipments of skins?—I am in a very awkward position in reference to that question. My desire to obtain the bonus is in opposition to the question of what is a right principle. I should have no objection to take the 1d. per skin, but I am afraid that another department might grow up.

1497. At present the loss is all with the settler?—I should not object to the bonus myself, but I question whether it would be a wise thing.

1498. *Hon. Mr. Williamson.*] Do you not think that if stoats were introduced they would afterwards become a nuisance in the country themselves?—No. It is against natural law that such animals should live on sheep. I speak with a great deal of confidence about the matter. If the rabbits diminished in number the others would. We read of people stating that in England or Scotland stoats in their wild state have been killing sheep; but I believe there is no authentic case.

1499. Are there any instances of ferrets attacking children?—Frequently of tame ferrets, but not wild ones. The ferret is a dangerous animal. I do not think any one acquainted with them, however, would fear that they would become a nuisance. They might take a few fowls. They live in colonies—they do not roam all over the country. Stoats never kill lambs; but, even supposing they did, how many lambs are killed every year by rabbits! The lambing on some stations that I could mention was reduced from 55 and 75 per cent. to 15 per cent. during the first year that the rabbits came, and I say the rabbits destroyed about 40 per cent. of the lambs. As a matter of fact, I am not afraid of stoats touching the lambs.

1500. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Evidence has been given that if the poison is properly mixed there would be no danger from fire?—I think if properly prepared it would lessen the risk; but I am afraid there would always be a little risk. The summer of last year would try it very much. The heat was extreme in Maniototo. My experience is that you would do more by summer poisoning than any other process. The young rabbits will always take poison.

1501. That will hold good even if the grass is green and plentiful?—Let it be ever so plentiful, so long as there is not too much growth in it. I do not say poison is as effectual as in winter; but it is more effectual than hunting with dogs, shooting, and so on. Arsenic sprinkled on mangel-wurzel and carrots I have not tried; but I am told it is used with great success.

1502. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] With regard to the importation of stoats, a letter has been read to this Committee offering to import any number at a far higher rate than that mentioned by you?—The man who brought them out for me is named Allbones, and he is now in the employ of the Government, I believe.

*Mr. G. S. Cooper:* He is not in the employ of the Government now: he is, I believe, employed by a private individual to bring these animals out.

1503. *Mr. Dodson.*] Would it not be a good plan in laying the poison to chip a piece of ground?—An excellent plan. Rabbits always come to fresh-turned earth. If the rabbits were really thoroughly poisoned in winter, and until the end of winter, all the rabbits left over would be very few, and these could be easily dealt with in summer.

1504. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Have you seen in the papers a description of a plough that has been adapted for laying poison on the ground? It turns up the ground and deposits little heaps at intervals?—I have seen something about it, but I fancy it would score the ground a good deal, and would be useless on high ground. It would spoil grass-land.

1505. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You said you thought if wire-netting were made a legal fence it would act hardly on small farmers. But supposing the contribution that could be called for would be simply the interest on the first outlay?—It would be very heavy on the man who put up the fence.

1506. But would it assist in the matter?—Wire-netting on good country is a very great aid in stopping rabbits from spreading. They take poison up against the fence a great deal better.

1507. But that is your only objection to make it a legal fence?—I am afraid that many would oppose a fence that could only be used in a very limited way.

1508. Your remarks about stoats apply to weasels as well?—Yes.