

393. Do you think, if rabbit-fences had been placed between the two districts, your efforts would have been simplified?—No; the net does not keep out rabbits; it only checks the inroad for a time. It is the other measures settlers adopt which checks the rabbit.

394. Rabbits keep to their respective localities; they do not travel much, do they?—Only slowly.

395. And this disease could only be distributed by scattering them?—You must hunt them with dogs. The dogs distribute the disease.

396. How do you account for some of the Kaikoura runs, which had tried your remedies, still being affected with the pest?—Perhaps they had used rabbit-fencing.

397. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Are you aware what state the rabbits were in, say, in 1875 in my particular locality?—No; but I know how they were in 1877.

398. I suppose you would not be surprised to learn that on my run of 12,000 acres the rabbits were pretty numerous in 1875. Now, how do you account for the fact of their being kept back for thirteen years subsequently with the aid of guns, dogs, and a little trapping, but no poisoning?—I can only say that they might have bred in the bush or upon the neighbours' runs, and then come back again. Wild animals are different from any others. I would also ask that the minutes of proceedings of the voluntary Rabbit Board we formed in 1884 be published for general information.

FRIDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 1889.

Mr. E. J. RIDDIFORD examined.

399. *Hon the Chairman.*] What is your name?—E. J. Riddiford.

400. Will you give this Committee any information you know in reference to rabbits?—Yes. What would you like to know?

401. What means you have used?—Mostly by the removal of their cover, introducing the natural enemy, wire netting, and judicious poisoning. That is the best way, according to my experience.

402. Then, you approve of wire netting?—Certainly; I could not manage without it. I consider it most necessary.

403. Do you think it stops the rabbits?—Not absolutely, but it is a very great help.

404. Now, with regard to poisoning, what is your opinion?—No doubt it is necessary to keep up a succession of poisoning, and with grain of good quality.

405. Throughout the year?—Yes. I should do it in the summer time if the rabbits troubled me, but I am pretty free from them, except on one part. I may say my run is clear. I have a few rabbits, there is no doubt, but nothing to speak of, or to interfere with the grazing of my stock.

406. Do they come from your neighbours?—I believe so.

407. Have you a fence at that point?—No; I cannot get one. I have put up ten miles, with no one to help me. It was Native land, and the title was an indifferent one. I have introduced the natural enemy at a cost of £1,500.

408. Do you think the wire fence should be made a legal one?—I am clearly of that opinion. I am sure it would be a very great assistance to the neighbours and the settlers generally.

409. Do you think it would be hard on some?—Which is the hardest, to have your country overrun with rabbits, or go to the expense of putting up a wire fence?—I am sure I should never have been able to have got rid of my rabbits if I had not put up a wire fence on that part of my run where they first appeared, adjoining Native land.

410. Do you use traps?—No; I disapprove of them. Some of the natural enemy that we turned out were caught. My neighbour on the east told me he had caught several, and he ordered his men to stop trapping.

411. And you use poison during the winter?—Yes.

412. Do you approve of hunting after poisoning?—Certainly. I consider the greatest effort ought to be made to catch any stray rabbits that have missed taking poison; one rabbit caught a fortnight after poisoning is worth five hundred caught later on in the season.

413. Have you any experience in connection with the disease spoken of by Mr. Coleman Phillips?—Well, I do not place much reliance in it. I think it is simply caused through in-breeding. I have heard of it for many years. I really do not pay much attention to it.

414. Mr. Coleman Phillips says the disease is spread by dogs?—I have a different opinion.

415. *Mr. Dodson.*] I wish you to be a little more explicit in regard to the wire fence being made legal: would this affect country settlers in small holdings?—Quite the reverse. In my opinion, it would not be detrimental to the small settler; clearly an advantage. In this particular locality which I spoke of I had to fence 600 or 700 acres, and, in doing so, shut out a good piece of the run, and kept the rabbits down the best way I could. On one side of the fence they increased in large quantities, while on the other side I had green grass and clover. I think it would be very advisable, and be of great assistance to the settlers, if the Government gave them an opportunity of purchasing stoats and weasels. There are many people who would, but cannot, purchase them, because they have not the chance of doing so.

416. Have the Government bred many ferrets in your neighbourhood?—No. I made an attempt to breed them, but I got so disgusted I gave up the idea. I tried to breed them considerably myself, and lost £200 over it, owing to distemper. I then turned my attention to something else. I spent £1,500 in turning out stoats and weasels, and the result is this: I used to export ten bales of rabbit-skins annually; now I only get two. Of course, the removal of the cover which the rabbits had has a good deal to do with my success.

417. What kind of cover is it?—Tea-tree, tauhinu, and fern.

418. The Government are going to stop the breeding of ferrets: do you consider that right?—