

Mr. J. MARTIN examined.

448. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—J. Martin.

449. Can you give this Committee any information with regard to the rabbits in your part of the country?—Yes. I have had ten years' experience; but I am not troubled very much with them just now.

450. What means have you been adopting?—I have had the land thoroughly well poisoned in the winter time, and have stuck to that steadily. I may say that I consider it necessary after poisoning to follow up with dogs, ferrets, or any other means which could be used.

451. Do you use traps?—I have used them; but would not recommend them, because I found that a good many ferrets were caught; but, of course, they may be useful in some parts.

452. Do you know anything about this disease referred to by Mr. Phillips?—My run joins Mr. Phillips's. For myself, I do not believe much in the disease, and have not tried to disseminate it.

453. What is your view of the wire rabbit-fence?—I approve of wire-netting fencing, but not to a large extent. I consider it is necessary to fence off subdivisions, say, into two or three hundred thousand acres, and let an Inspector look after and be responsible for each section; his duty to be to see that the rabbits were cleared off within, say, six months, and if that was not done, then the Inspector should be discharged.

454. You believe in poisoning?—Yes. I look upon that as the main remedy; in fact, I think using dogs does more harm than good, until the pest is reduced to reasonable limits.

455. You use dogs after poisoning, do you not?—Yes. I may say that summer poisoning is a mistake. The weight of evidence is all against such a course.

456. It should be done in the winter?—Yes.

457. Has there been much poisoning done during the summer in the Wairarapa?—Yes; and it has done more harm than good.

458. Has the Inspector called on you asking you to have a special poison in the summer?—Nothing special was told me.

459. Have they called on the settlers to use traps?—No; I do not think they have.

460. You are not in favour of traps, I understand?—No; unless in special cases, I would sooner not use them.

461. Have you turned out the natural enemy?—Yes; ferrets, cats, and I have used bisulphide of carbon and different machines.

462. *Mr. Lance.*] Do you know anything about this Rabbit Board which Mr. Phillips refers to?—Yes; I was a member of the Board at the time when it did fairly good work, but after a bit it seemed clear to me that the Government could deal with the matter very much better.

463. In what way did the Board fail in its duty: was there no clearing done?—There was a disinclination on the part of the Board to take action against some of the settlers. I think it was well tried, but not successfully.

464. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] Was this purely a voluntary Board?—I am not sure whether it was or not.

465. Mr. Phillips referred to a voluntary one?—He must have referred to one which was started at a meeting of settlers to see what they could do in the matter.

466. Were you a member of it?—Yes; but I found it would not work. It might perhaps have induced some of the settlers to turn out a few ferrets in the Wairarapa, but was designed more to interfere with Inspector's work than was advisable.

467. Do you consider the Inspectors have done more harm than good?—No; I am in favour of Inspectors; we should be swarming with rabbits if it were not for them. It is not the case, as many suppose, that the natural enemy is keeping the rabbit down; it is the poisoning that is doing the best work, together with hunting and attending to the work of extermination generally. I should use any means which would be of advantage. I believe the native hawk does as much good as any of the natural enemies; cats are also serviceable.

468. *Mr. Buchanan.*] When you first went there you found them very numerous?—Yes.

469. As numerous as anywhere you know of?—Yes; I sent away in one year a hundred and sixty thousand skins.

470. What is the nature of the ground?—Fern, manuka-scrub, and bush.

471. Plenty of cover?—Yes.

472. By the means you have been describing you have kept the rabbits in check, and are now comparatively clear?—Yes. The great bugbear in the South Wairarapa is the Native lands; rabbits breed there, and are distributed over the neighbourhood.

473. *Mr. Anderson.*] Do you think the Government should continue importing and breeding the natural enemy?—Yes; I think it would be a good plan to continue.

474. Do you think the mode adopted in your district would be applicable to a colder climate like the South Island?—I should say so.

475. Do you think wire netting is a check upon the spread of rabbits?—Yes; undoubtedly it is; but it should not be overdone, it is too great an expense.

476. *Mr. Dodson.*] What is your experience with bisulphate?—I have tried it; it is quite effectual, but it destroys the ferrets. I have tried several machines; one I got from Melbourne was just the same. I prefer working the rabbits out with tame ferrets to either of these means.

477. *Witness.* The real difficulty in rabbit-extermination is after the winter poisoning, when it will sometimes be found that through meddling work, such as fingering poisoned grain when laying it, using damaged grain instead of the very best, but chiefly through summer poisoning, a great many rabbits remain which are too cunning to be poisoned. This means great expense in ferreting and rabbiting. No expense must be spared to get rid of these rabbits before they breed again.