

notwithstanding the fact that some of the Inspectors have insisted, and in some cases even threatened to prosecute; still we declined to do it. I will mention an instance to show you how the rabbits have been cleared: within one of my properties, containing 27,000 acres, there is a large extent of rough country, such as rabbits would thrive upon; a short time ago a couple of young men were out shooting for nearly a week with dogs, and all they could get was five rabbits, and they never passed one. That fact, I think, I think the Committee will agree, was highly satisfactory. On another property, containing 13,000 acres, my manager reports there is not a single place where it was worth while to lay poison. The fact is, there are hardly any rabbits there. I do not wish to boast of what we have done: we have simply adopted what we considered to be the wisest course. After such an experience as ours, I say, let others try the same methods, and they will succeed as we have done. It might be said by some, perhaps, that the same plan would not succeed in another part of the country. To that I say I would not be afraid, nor would I object, to take up any rabbit-country. When I first took this land in the Wairarapa, as I told you before, I was laughed at by many of my neighbours, but we were determined to succeed. I am fully convinced that the rabbit-pest, if properly attended to, will be quite a thing of the past in a few years, but it must be dealt with steadily on the right principles.

136. *Mr. Walker.*] What did you poison with?—Oats and wheat poisoned with phosphorus.

137. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Are your neighbours and yourself in the same position?—Yes; we all of us in the block of country I refer to are in the same position.

138. And they have applied the same means?—Yes; and Mr. Riddiford, who has a considerable acreage there, turned out a large number of stoats and weasels; and where two or three years ago rabbits were thick, now hardly one is to be seen. I may say I always had very great faith in ferrets, and my reliance on them became thorough when one of my head shepherds came to me about three years ago and said, "The rabbits are not breeding this year." I told him that was all nonsense; the great secret was that the ferrets had eaten the young ones. And so it proved, as next year there were hardly any to be seen.

139. Do you find that the ferrets destroy the young lambs?—No; I can say this: that I get 100 per cent. of lambs on one of these properties, and, if they destroy any over that, I say, let them. I think 100 per cent. of lambs is quite sufficient; and, having, as I have stated, ferrets enough to keep down the rabbits, it is clear that they are more likely to decrease for want of rabbits to eat than to increase and eat lambs, which they could only get in spring.

140. Have you turned out any stoats on your run?—Not myself. Mr. Riddiford has, and they have done a great deal of good, having spread on to all our properties. Other people have turned out ferrets, and have begun to avoid the professional rabbit-er. Another remedy is what is known as the bladder-fluke. I believe it has helped to do good, but to what extent I am not in a position to say. I suppose it will tend to stop their breeding. With regard to rabbit-netting, I have always held that its use on a large scale would be a total mistake; but, of course, there might be cases where it has done some good. I only speak of my own experience. The rabbits always get in some day, through or under the netting. With us it has done no such good as to be worth the cost.

141. Do the rabbits pass through the netting?—They do to some extent. In my part of the district—South Wairarapa—we have used very little netting, and we are clear of the rabbits. In North Wairarapa, where netting has been put up extensively, the rabbits are worse than ever. I was at a little place the other day, fenced in. It was a regular rabbit-warren; they had men trapping, and the rabbits were more numerous inside than outside, which is easily explained if, as I believe, all their enemies are trapped.

142. *Captain Russell.*] Supposing the gentleman who owns this place had taken the same caution as yourself, would he not have got rid of them?—Yes; but I do not think the netting would have helped him so materially as to be worth the cost.

143. Then, let us suppose for a moment that his neighbours had been as energetic as you had been in your endeavours to get rid of the rabbits: would not the netting, under such circumstances, be of considerable help?—It would be of service, no doubt, to a certain extent; but my argument is that it is an unnecessary expense, which is proved by our success without it.

144. You alluded just now to the fluke: do you think that disease was introduced, or did it make its appearance spontaneously, as it were?—I do not think its introduction can be traced, but I should say it certainly did not appear spontaneously, as in no case has any form of life been shown to originate in that way.

145. Do you suppose it came by accident?—I should think so. It must have been introduced first of all; perhaps by a dog.

146. Have you noticed any of the rabbits with fluke?—Not on either of my own properties, but it is very common on some of my neighbours.

147. The rabbits had fluke?—Yes; they were in that state.

148. *Hon. Mr. Robinson.*] I gather from what you say that settlers working privately amongst themselves killing the rabbits, in your opinion, would do more good than by following the instructions of the Government and employing rabbit-ers?—I would not employ a professional rabbit-er on any account.

149. *Captain Russell.*] I want to be made a little clearer in regard to the place where you said the two young men only shot five rabbits: supposing those two men had shot over the same place two years ago, what would their bag have been then?—They would probably have shot twenty or thirty. The ferrets turned out there have done a lot of good. I sent, first of all, to Tasmania about fourteen years ago for ferrets, and turned them out. As a rule, you must first of all let the rabbits get on the country before you turn the ferret out, or it would starve; and probably we had an advantage in that respect, as in our county woodhens, rats, and birds are common, and would enable the ferret to live. If there are no rabbits or other forms of life where the ferrets are turned out there would be little animal food for them to live on.