

1889.
NEW ZEALAND.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON LIVE STOCK AND RABBITS
(REPORT OF THE.)

Report brought up 12th September, 1889, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extracts from the Journals of the Legislative Council.

WEDNESDAY, THE 3RD DAY OF JULY, 1889.

Ordered, "That a Committee be appointed, consisting of ten members, to consider all matters pertaining to live stock and to rabbits; with power to confer and sit together with any similar Committee which may be appointed by the House of Representatives, and to agree to a separate report. The Committee to consist of the Hon. Mr. Acland, the Hon. Mr. Campbell, the Hon. Mr. Miller, the Hon. Captain Morris, the Hon. Mr. Peter, the Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, the Hon. Mr. Robinson, the Hon. Mr. Walker, the Hon. Sir G. S. Whitmore, K.C.M.G., and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. STEVENS.)

TUESDAY, THE 27TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1889.

Ordered, "That the name of the Hon. Sir G. S. Whitmore, K.C.M.G., be discharged from the Joint Committee on Live Stock and Rabbits, and that of the Hon. Mr. Wigley placed thereon."—(Hon. Sir G. S. WHITMORE, K.C.M.G.)

TUESDAY, THE 10TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1889.

Resolved, "That leave be given to the Select Committee upon Live Stock and Rabbits to sit during the sitting of the Council to-morrow, in accordance with Standing Order No. 182."—(Hon. Mr. ACLAND.)

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

FRIDAY, THE 5TH DAY OF JULY, 1889.

Ordered, "That a Committee be appointed, consisting of ten members, to consider all matters pertaining to live stock and rabbits; with power to confer and sit together with any similar Committee which may be appointed by the Legislative Council, and to agree to a joint or separate report. The Committee to have power to call for persons, papers, and records. Three to be a quorum. The Committee to consist of Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, Captain Russell, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. G. F. RICHARDSON.)

TUESDAY, THE 30TH DAY OF JULY, 1889.

Ordered, "That the Live Stock and Rabbits Committee have leave to sit to-morrow, from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m., notwithstanding that the House be then sitting."—(Mr. LANCE.)

WEDNESDAY, THE 14TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1889.

Ordered, "That the petition of George Ross and another be referred to the Joint Live Stock and Rabbits Committee."—(Mr. T. THOMPSON.)

THURSDAY, THE 5TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1889.

Ordered, "That the petition of James Doris be referred to the Live Stock and Rabbits Committee."—(Mr. SEYMOUR.)

REPORT.

SHEEP.

Your Committee have the honour to report that they have inquired into various matters connected with the Stock Department, and are of opinion that the changes that were made last year have been beneficial, though they have not yet had the effect intended—of stamping scab out of the country.

The three districts that were infected with scab at the time of the last session still remain so, namely, Tophouse, Kaikoura, and Miranda. At the Tophouse and the neighbourhood very energetic

steps have been taken: two gangs of men were employed for some six months in scouring the country, and 1,250 wild sheep have been killed, many of them very scabby. No wild sheep are now known to exist there; but the Inspector of the district cannot be certain until he has had an opportunity of trailing sheep over the country.

The Loan and Mercantile Agency Company own the Birch Hill and adjoining stations, and for the last twelve months they have apparently done everything possible to thwart the action of the Inspector. Had they co-operated with him, there is very little doubt that the question of whether the country was clean or not would have been decided.

The Committee consider that the action of the Representatives of this company in this locality is deserving of the severest censure, in setting an example that would not be tolerated in a private individual, and which is most prejudicial to the best interests of the colony. Until this company is made to do its duty, this part of the country must remain on the infected list; but it is fair to say that the company dispute the ownership of the leasehold.

At Kaikoura the flock that was infected last year is now clean, but there has been a very remarkable outbreak in another direction. The country is known as the Bui Bui Run, and was considered by the owners to be free from scab, having been unstocked for about two years. In February last scab was discovered in an isolated flock of 800 sheep, which were at once destroyed. The scab was supposed to have been about a month old; but all the efforts that have been made to trace the cause of the disease have failed, and, until that is discovered, the country cannot be considered safe.

At Miranda scab was discovered in a flock of 200 sheep. These sheep were not destroyed, but were ordered by the Minister to be cleaned. Your Committee consider the sheep should have been at once destroyed. Thus, from various causes, New Zealand is still suffering from being an infected country; and, while your Committee recognise that good work has been done during the last year, they would urge upon the Government the absolute necessity of increasing vigilance until a clean bill of health can be shown for the entire colony.

BRANDING SHEEP.

Your Committee recommend that tattoo-marking on any part of the sheep should be a legal mark; and that a wool-brand should not be compulsory.

The Committee would also strongly urge that no sheep should be allowed to travel on the public roads without some easily visible wool-brand or mark.

RABBITS.

The number of rabbit-skins exported during the last year was 12,593,171, being an increase of nearly half a million on the preceding year. It would appear, therefore, that the number of rabbits is still increasing; but it is hoped that their encroachment on any further area of country will be much less rapid than has been the case in the past.

The Conference held in Sydney last year, after the most exhaustive experiments and most careful investigation, has reported that none of the diseases that came under their notice were of any practical use in getting rid of the rabbits, and they were compelled to fall back on the three known methods of dealing with them, namely, poisoning, the natural enemy, and fencing.

As to poisoning and the natural enemy, the evidence taken before the Committee goes conclusively in the same direction. Ferrets and stoats and weasels are allowed by all to be the cheapest and the most self-acting mode of dealing with rabbits. Your Committee, therefore, are at a loss to conceive on what grounds the Government have decided to discontinue the purchase of ferrets bred in the colony, and also to cease the importation of stoats and weasels.

Your Committee believe that this course will prove a great national calamity, and they strongly urge the Government to reconsider the matter, and beg them to encourage the breeding of ferrets in every possible manner, as well as to continue the importation of stoats and weasels in large and continuous numbers.

As distemper at times carries off large numbers of ferrets, it is very important that efforts should be made to ascertain whether inoculation could not be resorted to with good effect.

The Committee further recommend that private individuals and associations should receive the same concession as that now extended to Rabbit Boards, namely, £1 for £1 as subsidy on the amount raised by them for importing the natural enemy.

It being almost impossible to carry out concurrently, with advantage, the use of the natural enemy and the employment of men with large packs of dogs and traps, such means should be discouraged as much as possible wherever the natural enemy has been fairly established.

Fencing has been tried in North and South Canterbury and in Hawke's Bay, so far, with unqualified success. Taking into consideration the trouble and hardship that small settlers in the neighbourhood of large tracts of uncultivated land are subject to from the incursion of rabbits, the Committee suggest to the Government that assistance should be given to enable them to protect themselves, by supplying them with wire-netting fencing on easy terms, without interest; and by carrying the material on the railways free of cost.

The evidence taken before the Committee is of a very contradictory character, and proves conclusively that no hard-and-fast rule can be laid down for the destruction of rabbits. The methods used must vary with the varying conditions; but, in order that these conditions should be understood by those intrusted with the carrying out of the Act, the Committee think it very important that the officers should be removed as little as possible from one district to another.

Where Rabbit Boards exist the powers and duties of Inspectors ought to be defined. In these cases the District Inspector ought to have a seat *ex officio* on the Board, but not to be chairman; and he should be held responsible for the suppression of the rabbits in the Board's district.

Again, imprisonment should be an alternative penalty for removing live rabbits from one locality to another, and rewards should be offered for information that will insure conviction for such offence.

The Committee are of opinion that "The Rabbit Nuisance Act, 1886," should be amended in the above directions.

QUARANTINE-GROUND.

Your Committee recommend that the island of Motuhihi, situated in the Auckland harbour, and known as the quarantine island, should at once be declared a quarantine-ground for imported stock.

PETITIONS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE.

Your Committee further recommend that, in the case of the petitions of George Ross and James Doris, which the Committee have partly inquired into, the Government should cause full inquiry to be made into the matters referred to, by some person outside of the department.

J. B. A. ACLAND,
Chairman.

12th September, 1889.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE.

WEDNESDAY, 10TH JULY, 1889.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland, Hon. Mr. Campbell, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Robinson, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Mr. Stevens, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, Hon. Mr. G. F. Richardson, and Captain Russell.

The orders of reference were read.

Resolved, That the Hon. Mr. Acland be Chairman of the Joint Committee.

On motion of the Hon. Mr. Campbell, *Resolved*, That a return be asked for as to the cost of rabbit-fences and huts for caretakers throughout the colony.

Messrs. Lance, Buchanan, and Captain Russell made suggestions as to documents, &c., which it was necessary the Committee should be supplied with.

On motion of Mr. McKenzie, *Resolved*, That the Hon. the Chairman (Hon. Mr. Acland) and Mr. Lance be requested to draw up a list of documents, and that the Hon. the Chairman be authorised to write and ask that they may be furnished to the Committee.

The Committee then adjourned.

FRIDAY, 19TH JULY, 1889.

The Committee met at 10.30 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Campbell, Hon. Captain Morris, Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Robinson, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Sir G. S. Whitmore, K.C.M.G., Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, and Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

The Hon. the Chairman laid on the table a letter from Mr. Walker, M.H.R., which was read and considered.

Mr. Walker, M.H.R., attended and gave evidence.

Mr. Shaw, from the Live-stock Department, attended and was examined.

Resolved, That further consideration of this matter be postponed, and that Mr. Shaw do furnish the Committee with all the papers relating to this subject.

Resolved, That Mr. Richardson, Inspector of Sheep, should be called to give evidence before the Committee.

A discussion arose on the non-eradication of scab.

On motion of Mr. Buchanan, *Resolved*, That the reports of proceedings of the Conference of Inspectors held in October, 1888, and April, 1889, be supplied to the members of the Committee; also, that copies of the report of the Joint Committee on Sheep and Rabbits be supplied.

On motion of Mr. Lawry, *Resolved*, That all papers relating to the payment of moneys to Maoris in the North Island for killing rabbits be laid before the Committee.

The Committee then adjourned till Tuesday next, 23rd July, at 11 a.m.

TUESDAY, 23RD JULY, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Captain Morris, Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Robinson, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Sir G. S. Whitmore, K.C.M.G., Mr. Anderson, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, and Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

On motion of the Hon. Mr. Robinson, *Resolved*, That at the next meeting of the Committee the report of the Conference of Inspectors be considered.

Consideration of the dismissal of Agent Cunningham was then resumed.

On motion of the Hon. Mr. Walker, *Resolved*, That further consideration of this matter be postponed; that the Hon. the Minister of Lands be requested to attend the next meeting of the Committee, and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Minister.

Papers laid on the table: (1.) Return of moneys paid to the Natives in the North Island for killing rabbits. (2.) Memorandum from Mr. McGibbon *re* the use of wire-netting for rabbit-proof fences and making the same a legal fence.

The Committee then adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, 31ST JULY, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Campbell, Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Hon. Mr. G. F. Richardson, and Captain Russell.

An order of reference of 30th July, giving permission of the House for the Committee to meet, the House being then sitting, was read.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Papers, from the Farmer's Club, Waitahuna, for amendment of "The Branding Act, 1880" (L.S. 89/304), and the Statement of Expenditure of the Hawke's Bay Rabbit District Board of Trustees, were laid on the table.

Mr. Richardson, Chief Inspector of Sheep, Blenheim, attended and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee then adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Campbell, Hon. Captain Morris, Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Robinson, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Sir G. S. Whitmore, K.C.M.G., Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, and Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Consideration of the Conference of Inspectors was resumed—

Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4 were read and agreed to.

Paragraph 5 was read and considered. The Hon. Captain Morris moved, That paragraph 5 be agreed to. Debate arose thereon. Further consideration of this paragraph was postponed.

The Hon. Mr. Peter further moved, That this matter be postponed till copies of the paper can be supplied to the Committee.

The Hon. Mr. Walker moved, as an amendment, That, as the few useful suggestions contained in the Minutes of Proceedings of the Conference of Inspectors are amply provided for by Act, the remainder are not worth consideration, and that this Committee do not discuss the report at all.

The amendment of the Hon. Mr. Walker being put, the Committee divided, and the names were taken down as follow:—

Ayes, 5.—Hon. Mr. Robinson, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Sir G. S. Whitmore, K.C.M.G., Mr. Dodson, Mr. Kerr.

Noes, 7.—Hon. Captain Morris, Hon. Mr. Peter, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Captain Russell.

So it passed in the negative.

And the original motion being put, it was resolved in the affirmative.

On motion of Captain Russell, *Resolved*, That no flockowner in or near any clean district shall be compelled to brand his sheep with any other mark than his registered ear-mark, anything in "The Brands and Branding Act, 1880," to the contrary notwithstanding.

On motion of Mr. Kerr, *Ordered*, That the evidence given by Mr. Richardson, Inspector of Sheep, Blenheim, be printed.

The Committee then adjourned.

THURSDAY, 15TH AUGUST, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Campbell, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr.

Robinson, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Sir G. S. Whitmore, K.C.M.G., Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, and Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Mr. C. Pharazyn, of Featherston, was present by desire of the Committee.

On motion of Mr. Lance, it was resolved that a unanimous vote of thanks be given to Mr. Pharazyn for the highly useful and valuable information he had given to this Committee.

Mr. Pharazyn, having acknowledged the same, thereon withdrew.

Mr. Handyside, of Akitio, attended and gave evidence, and, having received the thanks of the Committee, withdrew.

Mr. McCrae attended and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee then adjourned till to-morrow.

FRIDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Campbell, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Consideration of the rabbit-pest resumed.

Mr. Coleman Phillips attended and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

Mr. Martin attended and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

Mr. E. J. Riddiford attended and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee then adjourned till Tuesday next at 11 a.m.

TUESDAY, 20TH AUGUST, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Robinson, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Consideration of the rabbit-pest resumed.

Mr. W. Beetham, of Masterton, attended and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

Mr. Huddleston attended and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

The petition of G. Ross was read.

Resolved, That further consideration of this matter be postponed.

Mr. Lawry gave notice to move at the next meeting of the Committee, as follows: "That, in the opinion of this Committee, the Island of Motuihi, situated in the Auckland Harbour, known as Quarantine Island, should at once be declared a quarantine-ground for imported stock."

A letter from Mr. Coleman Phillips was then read.

The Committee then adjourned till Friday next.

FRIDAY, 23RD AUGUST, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Campbell, Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Captain Morris, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Consideration *re* outbreak of scab on Mount Patriarch Run was resumed.

Mr. Hull, Sub-Inspector of Sheep, being present, gave evidence.

The Committee then proceeded to consideration of the petition of G. Ross.

Mr. McKenzie moved, That all the evidence taken on the matter of this petition be taken on oath.

The Committee deliberated.

And the question being put, the Committee divided, and the names were taken down as follow:—

Ayes, 7.—Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lawry, Mr. McKenzie.

Noes, 5.—Hon. Captain Morris, Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Dodson.

So it was resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. Hull, Sub-Inspector of Sheep, having taken the oath, gave evidence.

The Hon. Mr. Pharazyn moved, That, as the Sub-Inspector, whose conduct is complained of by the petitioner, acted under the instructions of the Inspector, this petition should have been sent to him in the first instance instead of to the Governor. Under these circumstances, this Committee declines to consider the petition any further.

The question being put, it passed in the negative.

Consideration of the petition was resumed.

Mr. Hull, Sub-Inspector of Sheep, was further examined, and, being thanked, withdrew.

The Committee deliberated.

It was resolved that Mr. Douglass, Chief Inspector of Sheep, Dunedin, be forthwith summoned before the Committee.

The Committee then adjourned till Saturday, 24th August, at 11.30 a.m.

SATURDAY, 24TH AUGUST, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, and Mr. J. McKenzie.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

The Hon. Mr. Acland being absent, it was resolved that the Hon. Mr. Pharazyn do take the chair.

Consideration of the petition of G. Ross was resumed.

Mr. Hull, Sub-Inspector of Sheep, was in attendance and gave evidence.

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee then adjourned.

MONDAY, 26TH AUGUST, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Pharazyn (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, and Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

The petition of Ross and others was further considered.

Papers laid on the table: (1.) From J. McKenzie, Esq., M.H.R., to Hon. Mr. G. F. Richardson, *re* Mr. Ross's complaint against Sub-Inspector Hull (L.S. 89/339). (2.) From Inspector Douglass, being report of a visit to Waihemo District (L.S. 89/372).

Mr. Douglass, Chief Inspector, Dunedin, was in attendance and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

Mr. G. Ross attended and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, That Mr. Ross be directed to attend the next meeting of the Committee, and to bring further evidence on this matter.

The Committee then adjourned till to-morrow at 11 a.m.

TUESDAY, 27TH AUGUST, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Campbell, Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Captain Morris, Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, and Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Paper laid on the table: Return of Expenditure by the Hurunui Rabbit Board for the Years 1887, 1888, and 1889.

Consideration of the petition of G. Ross was resumed.

Mr. Ross was present and again examined, and, being thanked, withdrew.

Mr. Doris attended and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

The Committee then adjourned.

THURSDAY, 29TH AUGUST, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Mr. Wigley, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, and Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Mr. Clifton, Chief Inspector of Sheep, Wellington, attended and gave evidence, and, being thanked, withdrew.

On motion of Mr. Lawry, *Resolved*, That the Island of Motuihi, situated in the Auckland Harbour, and known as the Quarantine Island, should at once be declared a quarantine-ground for imported stock.

A petition from Cyrus Goulter and others was read.

Resolved, That consideration of this petition be postponed.

Resolved, That Mr. Sub-Inspector Hull be again called before the Committee.

Resolved, That a sub-committee be appointed, to consist of the Hon. Mr. Acland, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Mr. Lance, and Mr. Buchanan, to draw up a draft report to be submitted to the Committee.

The Committee then adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present : Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Peter, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Mr. Wigley, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, and Mr. Lawry.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Mr. Hull being recalled was further examined, and, being thanked, withdrew.

The Hon. Mr. Walker moved, That the Committee do now adjourn.

The motion was, with the leave of the Committee, withdrawn.

On motion of Mr Anderson, *Resolved*, That the Stock Department be requested to furnish the Committee with copies of all correspondence in connection with the appointment of Mr. Clifton as Chief Inspector of Sheep in the Wellington District.

Resolved, That the Hon. the Minister of Lands be requested to attend the next meeting of the Committee.

The petition of Cyrus Goulter and others was then considered.

On the motion of the Hon. Mr. Miller, *Resolved*, That, as "The Rabbit Act, 1886," makes provision for the subject-matter of this petition, this Committee has no recommendation to make.

The Committee then adjourned till Friday next at 11 a.m.

FRIDAY, 6TH SEPTEMBER, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present : Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Mr. Wigley, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lawry, and Mr. J. McKenzie.

Papers laid upon the Table : (L.S. 89/354), (L.S. 89/379), (L.S. 89/392).

A draft report was submitted to the Committee, as follows :—

Your Committee have the honour to report that they have inquired into various matters connected with the Stock Department, and are of opinion that the changes that were made last year have been beneficial, though they have not yet had the effect intended—of stamping scab out of the country.

The three districts that were infected with scab at the time of the last session still remain so, namely, Tophouse, Kaikoura, and Miranda. At the Tophouse and the neighbourhood very energetic steps have been taken: two gangs of men were employed for some six months in scouring the country, and 1,250 wild sheep have been killed, many of them very scabby. No wild sheep are now known to exist there; but the Inspector of the district cannot be certain until he has had an opportunity of trailing sheep over the country.

The Loan and Mercantile Agency Company own the Birch Hill and adjoining stations, and for the last twelve months they have apparently done everything possible to thwart the action of the Inspector. Had they co-operated with him, there is very little doubt that the question of whether the country was clean or not would have been decided.

The Committee consider that the representatives of this company in this locality are deserving of the severest censure, in setting an example that would not be tolerated in a private individual, and which is most prejudicial to the best interests of the colony. Until this company is made to do its duty, this part of the country must remain on the infected list.

At Kaikoura the flock that was infected last year is now clean, but there has been a very remarkable outbreak in another direction. The country is known as the Bui Bui Run, and was considered by the owners to be free from scab, having been unstocked for about two years. In February last scab was discovered in an isolated flock of 800 sheep, which were at once destroyed. The scab was supposed to have been about a month old; but all the efforts that have been made to trace the cause of the disease have failed, and, until that is discovered, the country cannot be considered safe.

At Miranda scab was discovered in a flock of 200 sheep. These sheep were not destroyed, they were ordered by the Minister to be cleaned; and in coming to this determination your Committee consider that a grave mistake has been made: the sheep should have been at once destroyed. Thus, from various causes, New Zealand is still suffering from being an infected country; and, while your Committee recognise that good work has been done during the last year, they would urge upon the Government the absolute necessity of increasing vigilance until a clean bill of health can be shown for the entire colony.

RABBITS.

The number of rabbit-skins exported during the last year was 12,593,171, being an increase of nearly half a million on the preceding year. It would appear, therefore, that the number of rabbits is still increasing; but it is hoped that their encroachment on any further area of country will be much less rapid than has been the case in the past.

The Conference held in Sydney last year, after the most exhaustive experiments and most careful investigation, has reported that none of the diseases that came under their notice were of any practical use in getting rid of the rabbits, and they were compelled to fall back on the three known methods of dealing with them, namely, poisoning, the natural enemy, and fencing.

As to poisoning and the natural enemy, the evidence taken before the Committee goes conclusively in the same direction. Ferrets and stoats and weasels are allowed by all to be the cheapest and the most self-acting mode of dealing with rabbits. Your Committee, therefore, are at a loss to conceive on what grounds the Government has decided to discontinue the purchase of ferrets bred in the colony, and also to cease the importation of stoats and weasels.

Your Committee believe that this course will prove a great national calamity, and they strongly urge the Government to reconsider the matter, and beg them to encourage the breeding of ferrets in every possible manner, as well as to continue the importation of stoats and weasels in large and continuous numbers.

As distemper at times carries off large numbers of ferrets, it is very important that efforts should be made to ascertain whether inoculation could not be resorted to with good effect.

The Committee further recommend that private individuals and associations should receive the same concession as that now extended to Rabbit Boards, namely, £1 for £1 as subsidy on the amount raised by them for importing the natural enemy.

It being almost impossible to carry out concurrently, with advantage, the use of the natural enemy and the employment of men with packs of dogs and traps, such means should be discouraged as much as possible wherever the natural enemy has been fairly established.

Fencing has been tried in North and South Canterbury and in Hawke's Bay, so far, with unqualified success.

The evidence taken before the Committee is of a very contradictory character, and proves conclusively that no hard-and-fast rule can be laid down for the destruction of rabbits. The methods used must vary with the varying conditions; but, in order that these conditions should be understood by those intrusted with the carrying out of the Act, the Committee think it very important that the officers should be removed as little as possible from one district to another.

Where Rabbit Boards exist the powers and duties of Inspectors ought to be defined. In these cases the District Inspector ought to have a seat *ex officio* on the Board, but not to be chairman.

Again, imprisonment should be an alternative penalty for removing live rabbits from one locality to another, and rewards should be offered for information that will insure conviction for such offence.

The Committee are of opinion that "The Rabbit Nuisance Act, 1886," should be amended in the above directions.

BRANDING SHEEP.

Your Committee are of opinion that the ear-mark of sheep made with authorised nippers or pliers only should be a *prima facie* proof of ownership; that tattoo-marking on any part of the sheep should be a legal mark; and that a wool-brand should not be compulsory.

The Committee would also strongly urge that no sheep should be allowed to travel on the public roads without some easily visible wool-brand or mark.

QUARANTINE-GROUND.

Resolved, That, in the opinion of this Committee the island of Motuhihi, situated in the Auckland harbour, known as the quarantine island, should at once be declared a quarantine-ground for imported stock.

Mr. McKenzie moved, as an amendment, That this Committee is of opinion, from the evidence before them—(1) That the administration of the Stock Department is still very unsatisfactory; (2) that the changes made during the last year have not been beneficial in stamping scab out of the country or in putting down the rabbit-pest.

Your Committee therefore recommend that a Commission should be appointed during the recess to inquire into the whole working of the department, with power to visit districts and take evidence; such Commission to report to the Minister what recommendations, if any, they may think necessary to make relating to the administration of the department, and alterations in the laws affecting the same.

Resolved, That consideration of this report be postponed.

Mr. Anderson moved, That consideration of his resolution *re* appointment of Mr. Clifton to be Chief Inspector of Sheep in the Wellington District be postponed. Agreed to.

The petition of Doris was read and considered.

Mr. Lance moved, That this petition be referred to the Live-stock Department for their remarks, and that the original diary for June, 1888, be sent for. Motion agreed to.

The Committee then adjourned.

TUESDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present: Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Mr. Wigley, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, Hon. Mr. G. F. Richardson, and Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Petition of Doris considered.

Mr. Clifton, Chief Inspector of Sheep, Wellington, was in attendance and was examined, and, being thanked, withdrew.

Mr. McKenzie moved, That the amendment on the draft report of the sub-committee be adopted.

The question being put, the Committee divided, and the names were taken down as follow :—

Ayes, 3.—Mr. Duncan, Mr. Lawry, Mr. McKenzie.

Noes, 8.—Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Mr. Wigley, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Captain Russell.

So it passed in the negative.

The draft report of the sub-committee was then considered.

Report read seriatim.

Paragraph 1 : The Hon. the Chairman moved that Paragraph 1 be agreed to.

The question being put, the Committee divided, and the names were taken down as follow :—

Ayes, 7.—Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Captain Russell.

Noes, 3.—Mr. Duncan, Mr. Lawry, Mr. McKenzie.

So it was resolved in the affirmative.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 4 read, and amendment proposed in last line : After "list," to insert the words "but it is fair to say the company dispute the ownership of the land." Amendment agreed to.

Paragraph 4, as amended, agreed to.

Paragraph 5 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 6 read. Amendment proposed.

Motion made and question proposed, That the words "and in coming to this decision," and "a grave mistake has been made," remain part of the paragraph.

The Committee divided, and the names were taken down as follow :—

Ayes, 5.—Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. McKenzie.

Noes, 7.—Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Mr. Wigley, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Kerr, Captain Russell.

So it passed in the negative.

Paragraph 6 agreed to.

The Committee then adjourned till Wednesday at 11 a.m.

WEDNESDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 1889.

The Committee met at 11 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present : Hon. Mr. Acland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Walker, Hon. Mr. Wigley, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry, Mr. J. McKenzie, Captain Russell.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

Consideration of the draft report was resumed.

Paragraphs 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 were read and agreed to.

Paragraph 14 read. Amendment proposed. Mr. Lance moved, To add at end of paragraph the following words : "Taking into consideration the trouble and hardship that small settlers in the neighbourhood of large tracts of uncultivated land are subject to from the incursion of rabbits, the Committee suggest to the Government that assistance should be given to enable them to protect themselves by supplying them with wire-netting, on easy terms, without interest, and by carrying the material on the railways free of cost."

And the question being put, That the words proposed to be added be so added, the Committee divided, and the names were taken down as follow :—

Ayes, 6.—Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. McKenzie.

Noes, 5.—Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Wigley, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Lawry, Captain Russell.

So it was resolved in the affirmative.

Paragraph 14, as amended, agreed to.

Paragraph 15 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 16 read. Amendment proposed. Mr. Buchanan moved, To add, at end of the paragraph, these words : "and should be held responsible for the suppression of the rabbits in the Board's district."

The question being put, it was resolved in the affirmative.

Paragraph 16, as amended, agreed to.

Paragraphs 17 and 18 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 19 read. The Hon. Mr. Miller moved, That the first part of the paragraph be struck out.

And the question being put, That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause, the Committee divided, and the names were taken down as follow :—

Ayes, 6.—Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lawry.

Noes, 7.—Hon. Mr. Miller, Hon. Mr. Wigley, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Duncan, Mr. McKenzie, Captain Russell.

So it passed in the negative.

Paragraph 19, as amended, was agreed to.

Paragraphs 20 and 21 read and agreed to.

The petitions of Doris and Ross being further considered, Mr. Lance moved the following resolution: "That, in the case of the petitions of G. Ross and James Doris, which the Committee have partly inquired into, the Committee are of opinion that the Government should cause full inquiry to be made into the matters referred to by some persons outside of the department." Agreed to.

Resolved, That the report, as amended, be adopted.

The Committee then adjourned.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 31ST JULY, 1889. (Hon. Mr. ACLAND, Chairman.)

T. G. RICHARDSON, Sheep Inspector, examined.

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Perhaps it would be convenient if you would tell us, without putting questions to you as to every particular, what has been your experience, and what you have done for the past year. Each member of the Committee can put questions to you afterwards, but they would perhaps first like to hear a statement coming from yourself?—I went over to Blenheim, in the Marlborough District, in October last, as Inspector. At that time they held clean certificates throughout the district. A gang of fifteen men were employed in September to scour the country known as Tophouse, Manuka Island, and Mount Patriarch Blocks—to scour for wild sheep, commencing on the 1st October.

2. *Mr. Lance.*] And you say they were at that time holding clean certificates?—Yes.

3. *Hon. Mr. Peter.*] How many men did you say were employed?—Fifteen altogether. The men had not been scouring very long before they got scabby sheep outside the fences. They continued scouring to the first week in November, getting sheep all the time, several of them scabby. In November the men went over to the Red Hills and Manuka Island Blocks.

4. *Mr. Lance.*] Was that on the south side of the Wairau?—North side of the Wairau. They got ten sheep on the Wether hills, seven of them with the Birch Hill mark on, and five of these were scabby. These sheep were known by the manager of the Birch Hill to be there since June—from June to November.

5. *Captain Russell.*] Who has the Birch Hill Run?—The Loan and Mercantile Company. The men were then moved round to the Tophouse Block; they went all through that block until January, when they returned to Red Hills again. During the whole time they were killing wild and marked sheep, but the sheep were not scabby. In February they came back to Mount Patriarch, having scoured that and the surrounding country. On the 27th February they got five sheep with the Birch Hill ear-mark upon them: of these, two were scabby. They continued scouring until the 11th March, but did not get any more. I paid twelve of the men off, keeping, however, three on to the end of March, but they only got two long-tailed lambs. I wished the Loan and Mercantile Company to stock the country—to turn out a lot of sheep and trail over the country. This would have enabled us to discover whether there was any more scabby sheep there or not; but they would not do that. As I said, I paid the men off; all of them at the end of March. There has been no one on the block since. The Loan and Mercantile said they had nothing to do with the sheep or land outside fences.

6. *Hon. the Chairman.*] In whose name was the license?—In the name of the Loan and Mercantile Company.

7. And you say there has been nothing done since?—I laid an information against the Loan and Mercantile under the 27th section of the Act, and another under section 2 of the amended Act of 1888.

8. When was that?—In May. I have been endeavouring to get them to stock the run. Mr. Hanna told me that if I would cancel the lease he would do everything I wanted him to do.

9. *Captain Russell.*] What was the result of the information laid against the company?—They had it adjourned; they disputed the ownership of the property. The case is adjourned to September. A writ has been issued for rent. The Magistrate said he could not decide until the ownership was settled.

10. *Hon. the Chairman.*] The last time they were inspected before October: were they inspected by you?—No; I went there on the 7th October.

11. What was the date you say they held a clean certificate?—The certificate was given on the 24th September.

12. Then, you say every one there held at that time a clean certificate?—Yes; when I went there.

13. Was there any suspicion about any of these runs?—It was doubtful about the Patriarch Block, but no one said it was scabby; they said it was free of sheep.

14. There was supposed to be no sheep on it at the time, and you put men on to scour it?—The men were employed before I took charge.

15. *Mr. Dodson.*] Would it not be well to get some information as to the present state of the run: in whose name is it?—It stands in the name of the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Company.

16. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have they offered to assist you?—They refuse to assist me. They say that they would do anything I liked to ask them if I would only cancel the lease; but I have no power to cancel the lease. I have laid an information against them under the 27th section of the Act and another under section 2 of the amended Act of 1888 for not taking efficient steps to clean their sheep. They have not done anything. I want to get possession of the run under the 33rd section if I can. If I once got possession I would soon clean it.

17. In October, you say, the men found wild and scabby sheep, and in November more wild and scabby sheep, which they killed?—Yes.

18. Then they went to Manuka Island, where they found ten?—Yes; seven with the Birch Hill mark, and five of the seven scabby. The country was scoured the last autumn before, and there was supposed to be no sheep on it. These were sheep that came down after the first fall of snow in June.

19. Then the men were sent to Tophouse?—Where there were a few wild sheep, but none scabby.

20. Then, having returned to the Red Hills?—Several sheep were killed, but no scabby ones.

21. Then to Mount Patriarch, and after scouring that country for about three weeks, they found five sheep with the Birch Hill ear-mark?—And the scab-brand (S) for infected sheep. These were shorn about fourteen months.

22. These were killed on the 27th February?—The 27th February the last scabby sheep was killed.

23. Then on the 11th March you discharged twelve of the fifteen men?—Yes.

24. Why so?—They could not find any more wild sheep: there were no more about there. The ganger told me it was quite useless to keep the men on there, as there were no more to be found.

25. Then on the 31st March you discharged the remainder?—Yes.

26. They had not seen a single sheep in the interval?—They got two long-tailed lambs.

27. Were they clean or scabby?—Clean. Several of the sheep killed in October were shorn on Mount Patriarch Run only eight or nine months before.

28. You say you wished the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Company to put sheep on the run?—Yes; I wished them to stock the run, to see whether it was clean or not. They refused to have anything whatever to do with it unless I should guarantee them for whatever sheep returned short, or dip if scabby; in fact, they refused to assist me in any way.

29. On what ground?—On the ground that they had nothing to do with anything outside the fence, as they had abandoned the ground and sheep.

30. But the sheep, they had not abandoned them?—They said they had abandoned all outside the fences. I should have laid the information before, but was delayed owing to the Supreme Court sittings.

31. You supposed there were no wild sheep there?—Not on that block: on Bell's, the North Bank Block; there are wild sheep there, and have been for thirty years, and they are not fenced.

32. Who does that belong to?—Bell Brothers.

33. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] Any scab in those sheep?—No; they have no scab on that run; these last thirteen years they have held a clean certificate.

34. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You say the hearing of the information is adjourned to the 2nd September, owing to this dispute about ownership?—Yes.

35. *Mr. Lance.*] You say this last scabby sheep was killed towards the end of February?—Yes.

36. I see by your letter, which is dated the 6th March, you say the number of sheep killed was 1,250; no scabby sheep were killed since November last. I am informed that five Birch Hill marked sheep were killed?—On the 27th February two out of the five were scabby.

37. Long-tailed sheep?—No; sheep that were shorn and S-branded about fourteen months before.

38. After you discharged twelve men, you kept on three to the end of the month. Of course, our great object is to know whether the country is permanently clean or not. This scouring, I suppose, must be a very expensive business. I want to know from you whether you had full power to spend what money you liked with that object in view, and whether the department aided you?—I was told that £1,000 had been set apart. I spent more than that—near £1,100. I was never denied any funds, but I never asked any. I spent what I thought necessary.

39. Would it not have been a good thing to have kept one man to potter about in the snow looking for sheep? We know that snow is a very useful agent in discovering the locality where wild sheep are likely to be: they are easily tracked in the snow. You are aware that our great object is to get the last sheep. Would it not be a great advantage if you were not limited as to funds?—I would have done that; but Mr. Crisp was continually threatening to take proceedings against me for trespass, or for the men driving sheep through the fences.

40. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Who is Mr. Crisp?—He is the manager of the Birch Hill Run for the Loan and Mercantile.

41. *Mr. Lawry.*] Did he make that threat in writing: was it by letter?—No; it was in conversation.

42. *Mr. Lance.*] But would that have been a good plan which I suggest?—Yes; I would have done that, but I did not know what proceedings he proposed to take against me.

43. *Mr. Dodson.*] And, if he had, what would have been the result?—I do not know. He threatened me for putting the men on the country; also for driving sheep through the fence.

44. But you surely did not take the men off on account of a threat of that kind?—I kept the men on till I thought all the sheep were off.

45. *Mr. Lance.*] But did the threat influence you in not keeping the men on as long as you would have kept them on?—I should have kept them on longer if Mr. Crisp had not continually threatened proceedings. I laid the information thinking I would get possession of the run myself: that was my main object in taking the men off. The proper thing now to be done would be to send men out to see if any stragglers could be found. If they could not find stragglers, they should put on a flock of sheep and trail them over the country; that would very soon have told whether there was scab there or not.

46. *Hon. Mr. Peter.*] If they disclaimed ownership, I should like to know how it was they came to threaten you?—I really do not know why they threatened me with proceedings.

47. *Mr. Lance.*] Let me ask you one or two more questions. We find that in September of last year Sub-Inspector Knyvett granted a clean certificate. On the 20th November he inspected the flock again and found scabby sheep in it. Can you explain how that was?—September was before my time. It was the 24th September, but I know nothing of it. I took charge in October. In November I sent him over again, and he then got a scabby sheep inside the fence. Crisp blames the men for driving that sheep in.

48. He has no ground for that?—Still, he says so.

49. Do you know any reason why the Sub-Inspector granted that certificate?—I believe the Inspector there instructed him that, if he did not find scab, he was to give a clean certificate. He was ordered to give the certificate. That is what I understand took place.

50. Well, then, on the 20th November he did find scab; but there is no information laid until the 2nd May?—No; you cannot lay information against people if they are doing anything like what is fair. You have to give the order to clean in six months under the amended Act of 1888. I have no fault to find on account of the sheep inside the fence, but of those outside.

51. *Hon. the Chairman.*] If they deny owning the run, and their sheep be there and are scabby, they have not abandoned the sheep to run over the country?—He said that they had nothing to do with outside the fence.

52. *Mr. Lance.*] Now, Crisp, as manager for the Loan and Mercantile, complains that you have spited him by over-inspection; and he goes on to say that in November and December last he mustered; that in January and February he was prepared for inspection, but he could not, or did not, see you?—I could not be there in that one place all the year round; I had other portions of the country to go over.

53. On the 25th March he received notice to muster. He complains that it was injurious to him to muster then?—In November, when he told me he was not going to dip off the shearing, I said that I should see the flock later on. He said, "I am going to muster in April or May to draft culls." I sent him notice so that the sheep would not be put through the yards without an Inspector being there.

54. What is the complaint about mixing up with Carter's sheep?—I do not know anything about that. The runs join; they are fenced; but neither Carter's nor Bell's are scabby.

55. *Mr. Dodson.*] That is on the south side of the river?—Yes; on the south side of the river. They have a clean certificate. I had nothing to do with "mixing" his sheep.

56. I do not understand that Mr. Lance is making any complaint by asking these questions?—I know that Mr. Lance is not, but I know what Mr. Crisp is doing.

57. *Mr. Lance.*] He says another thing: he complains that injustice has been done him; that he has been unjustly treated by the Inspector?—One cause of his complaint is that he is compelled to dip before sending away his sheep, and that Carter is not compelled to do so. If you look to the 29th section of the Act you will see that he cannot remove his sheep without having dipped them. Carter has a clean certificate, and has held a clean certificate for years, so that I cannot touch him.

58. Bell Brothers are in the same position?—Yes; they are in the same position. They are the adjoining run. They also hold a clean certificate.

59. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] I may tell the Committee that I have looked into this matter as head of the department, and I am quite satisfied that Crisp has been treated as he ought to be treated.

60. *Mr. Lance.*] The department, witness, decided that if the leasehold was cleared of sheep to the satisfaction of the department surrender would be accepted?—If there was such an arrangement made it was entered into before I had charge of the district. When I took charge of the district I went over the country. There were four hundred or five hundred sheep killed on that block. I could not give in a report that it had been cleared.

61. *Mr. Dodson.*] In fact, you were not satisfied that the country was clean?—No; there were some five hundred and fifty sheep killed there or around there—the Mount Patriarch country—during the month of October.

62. When?—After I went there in October.

63. *Mr. Lance.*] You refused to give a certificate until you had proved the country was clean—first by scouring the whole of the surrounding country, then by trailing-out, and next by mustering?—Yes.

64. And they refused to give you the sheep necessary to do the trailing-out?—Yes; they said they would do it if I would be responsible for the sheep that came in short, or dip them if scabby.

Hon. Mr. Richardson: I should say, in regard to the offer referred to by Mr. Lance's question, that that offer was not made for all time. It was made with the view of administering the Act, and would hold good if certain things were done. If these things were not done, then it is not to be thought that the offer still stood open. Now, let them do what they liked, the offer would not be made again. They have since put the Government to very considerable expense in cleaning the country.

65. *Mr. Lance.*] Do you suppose that the country is free from scab outside?—I would not say for the Birch Hill country, when people have mustered their sheep without dipping.

66. Do you think it possible that scabby sheep come over this country from Pelorus Sound?—All that bush-country is full of sheep from one end to the other; but no scabby sheep have been found there.

67. Was there not some doubt about D'Urville's Island?—There was some doubt. I was there with the men on it in September, and again in January. I could not find any scabby sheep on it.

68. There were some rams belonging to Mr. John Kerr, of which some mention is made: can you tell us what that is about?—That is a very simple matter. Mr. Kerr came to Blenheim and asked me what clause he would have to comply with suppose he bought sheep of Mr. Carter. I told him it was only necessary to give notice to the runholders. That he could drive his sheep bought from Carter, because Carter held a clean certificate.

69. And they were brought from Carter's to Tophouse?—Yes; there was no infected country to go through. They were growling because they could not move without complying with the 29th section of the Act, whereas Mr. Carter could. They had not to comply with that section, holding a clean certificate. Mr. Crisp had a lot of rams for sale. It was really myself that got him a purchaser; but when I told him he would have to dip under the 29th section of the Act he objected.

70. Mr. Crisp seems to object to everything?—He does object to everything. Then he wanted me to go to Blenheim to get the advice of a lawyer. I told him I knew as much about the matter as a lawyer. I told him if he sent away any sheep without a permit I would lay an information against him. He said he would sell to Messrs. Kerr and Adams, and let them drive the sheep away.

71. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] You could not stop him removing the sheep?—I can only enforce the penalties of the Act. I could not stop him removing the sheep. I can only enforce the penalties for breach of the law.

72. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] Does not the Act empower you to put a man on infected property?—Yes; if I have permission of the Magistrate under the 33rd section.

73. *Mr. Lance.*] Then, we hear that Mr. Carter sold some sheep about a fortnight later to Mr. John Kerr; that they passed through Birch Hill Run, which has a clean certificate, and then the Manuka Island, which is infected; and he complains of trouble and expense?—With regard to Carter's sheep, he has a clean certificate for all his flocks, and I cannot do anything with him.

74. *Mr. Dodson.*] But, in driving through to Nelson Province?—The only thing I could do would be to consider what sheep were necessary under section 46, and no scabby sheep were driven through for many months. I did not think it necessary to dip them; but, in the case of the Birch Hill sheep, they must be dipped under the 29th section of the Act.

75. Did you have any conversation with Mr. Kerr as to dipping the sheep?—Not before starting. Kerr said he would dip them when he got home.

76. Then, it is not true that you only wished them to dip, and difficulties were thrown in your way?—There was nothing that I considered it necessary to dip for.

77. You did not wish them dipped?—They were clean sheep, going from a clean run. Moreover, sheepowners would not pay any attention to me if I asked them to do what was not in the Act.

78. Then, there was no difference of treatment in regard to Carter and Crisp?—The Birch Hill people were owners of the adjoining scabby run, and they could not remove their sheep unless they dipped under the 29th section of the Act. I consider it my duty to see that the Act is complied with.

79. I would like to be more clearly informed as to whether the Inspector thinks the outside country between Mr. Kerr's, the Manuka, and the Red Hill Block should not be gone over again?—I think it should be gone over this summer. I wanted them to give me sheep, as I have already stated, to put on the country, so that I could prove whether there are scabby sheep there or not.

80. Although you are pretty well satisfied in your own mind, you would like to be sure?—Yes; I would like to see it stocked. The men have been over it again and again and found no scabby sheep. I wanted Mr. Hanna to turn out a lot of sheep and trail them over the country, to go right through; if there were any scabby sheep about these would be sure to pick them up. I got Mr. Kerr to do that, and his sheep were mustered, and neither wild or scabby sheep came in.

81. Would you find it to be your duty to report that to the department?—I think I have reported it.

82. I have not seen it?—I have sent in my quarterly report. I think I must have stated it in that.

Hon. Mr. Richardson: I may state that Mr. Richardson mentioned these same things to me which he has now told to the Committee: he said even more, I think.

83. *Mr. Dodson.*] There is no safety until these things which you recommend are done?—No; there is no safety till the country is stocked: that is the first thing to be done. It is true the Loan and Mercantile people offered me sheep if I would pay for any loss, and dip them that came in scabby. They were also ready to do anything I wanted if I would cancel the lease of Mount Patriarch Run.

84. *Hon. the Chairman.*] They evidently want to get rid of that lease?—Mr. Hanna told me on the club steps that if not they must go into Court. He said: "We will do anything you like if you will cancel the lease."

85. *Mr. Dodson.*] Does not that arise from the state of their uncertainty that the country is not clean?—I do not think they know anything about it.

86. Crisp must know something about it?—I do not think that Crisp knows anything about it either, for there are reasons where men having such property are anxious to get rid of the lease. Mr. Crisp himself admits that what I want to do is proper.

87. The Committee will assist you to make sure that this block of country is entirely clean. Until that is done there is no safety?—No; not until the block is stocked. If you put a flock of sheep on it you will soon find out whether there are scabby sheep there or not.

88. *Mr. Kerr.*] The Birch Hill country runs up alongside the Red Hill and Patriarch Runs. The country is bounded by the river for nearly twenty miles. There is nothing to prevent sheep crossing the river and getting over to the other side?—No; there is nothing to prevent them crossing at certain times.

89. When Mr. Crisp brought in his sheep, in order to get rid of any danger, did you not ask him to dip them?—Yes; and he refused.

90. *Mr. Dodson.*] Did he not dip them a month afterwards?—No; the Birch Hill sheep are not dipped to this day.

91. *Mr. Kerr.*] In mustering they lost four or five. The gate was close to the paddock that the Birch Hill sheep were in?—That was on Patriarch.

92. Close alongside the paddock?—Not far from it.

93. The Birch Hill sheep were shorn and branded the year before?—Yes; about fourteen or fifteen months before.

94. So that there was no mistake?—No.

95. After you had kept a great number of men there, it was not possible for a scabby sheep to be left there?—I do not think it was; scab was only found in a part of the run, in a corner of about six thousand acres.

96. Did Mr. Bayly tell Knyvett to give the certificate?—Mr. Hull was the Inspector in charge at the time. I think it was this way: Bayly gave instructions to Hull, and Hull gave instructions to Knyvett. Knyvett told me that he did not think it was right, but he had to do it. He told me he objected to it. But all that was before my time.

97. Was it six weeks afterwards that scabby sheep were found?—About two months; but all that was before my time. I cannot tell you about it; it was before I went there.

98. Have you any reason to think you would be interfered with as to the Birch Hill flock?—I have really no power. I am trying all I can to get power from the Magistrate to take possession under the 33rd section.

99. Have you put yourself in communication with Mr. Hanna?—When I speak to Mr. Hanna on the subject he says Crisp is manager; if I want anything done Crisp sends me to Hanna.

100. Mr. Hanna, in a letter which I have here, says he was anxious to work with you in every way?—He has not worked with me in any way; I do not care what Mr. Hanna says to the contrary. I have had more opposition from the Loan and Mercantile Company since I went to the district than I ever had before since I entered the department. I never before had such opposition shown; but they said if I would cancel the lease they would do anything I wanted done.

101. Mr. Hanna, in a letter of the 27th instant, says: "I need hardly assure you that the Loan and Mercantile Company are exceedingly anxious to work in harmony with the Government in their efforts to eradicate scab; and I am authorised and prepared to meet them in every possible way"?—He will not meet me in any way whatever.

102. Then, they have not corresponded to your advances?—I have tried them in every way, and I could do nothing with them. I have reported everything that was going on.

103. He says he is authorised and prepared to meet you in every possible way?—He has never told me that.

104. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Does Mr. Hanna say anything in his letter about the surrender of the run?—

105. *Mr. Kerr.*] Is it a fact that they took proceedings, or threatened to take proceedings, against you for going on the run?—They said the men drove the scabby sheep I mentioned there; and they threatened to take proceedings against me for that.

106. Are they not running cattle on the country?—There are cattle running on the country.

107. Is it not true that the manager of the Birch Hill flock said he would not dip on account of the expense of it?—Yes; owing to the expense.

108. *Mr. Dodson.*] How many sheep are there in the Birch Hill flock?—About 29,000; but, then, there are 2,500 on the Patriarch, 2,000 at Tophouse, and 25,000 on Birch Hill proper.

109. Something over 30,000 altogether?—No; about 29,000.

110. *Mr. Lance.*] There is a great mass of correspondence here, from which it appears that the company have not a leg to stand on in regard to this matter. Here is a letter of the 7th June, in which they say they are willing to do everything, but they are informed that the back-country of Patriarch is infested with wild sheep. The Inspector answers, pointing out that in any circumstances compliance with the Act for the purpose of cleaning the district rested with them. Then it is said the department are firm. Then the company say they are willing to do everything, but they do not do it. Is that the position?—Yes, that is the position. They will not do a single thing. Crisp told me I was very hard in working the Act. I said I was surprised when I heard that, because I was generally told I was lenient. The fact is I have never had any trouble until I went up there.

Rabbits.

111. Now, witness, can you tell us something about rabbits?—The district is under a Rabbit Board. I never had the working of the Rabbit Act there: it is all under the Rabbit Board. They are introducing the natural enemy. They say they wish to give the work of the Board a fair trial. When I was there four years ago rabbits were spread over a good bit of the country. It appears that they are more spread about now than then.

112. Are they not a good deal worse?—Yes; a good deal. I do not know very much about it. There were a few in the Awatere. They are now right up the valley. There were a few in the Wairau, but they are now spread right up.

113. *Mr. Dodson.*] Have they got right up to Carter's?—Yes; right up to Birch Hill.
114. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] Which kind of rabbit are they, the brown or the silver-grey?—They are a mixture of both.
115. *Mr. Dodson.*] The grey rabbit is the dangerous one?—They appear to me to be more white than grey.
116. *Mr. Lawry.*] Do you know anything of the rabbits about Flaxburn?—Knyvett tells me they are worse than formerly in some places, but I cannot see that they are worse. The returns show there are more sheep than formerly—1884, 52,000; last year, 56,000.
117. What is the weight of wool?—I do not know.
118. *Mr. Dodson.*] People are fencing a good deal more; that accounts for the increase?—I do not know about that.
119. *Mr. Lance.*] But you have not much to do with rabbits: do you think the Board is doing its duty?—No fault can be found in their way of working. At present they are poisoning and trapping, and should continue doing so.
120. *Mr. Dodson.*] The new Board?—Yes.
121. Are they going on different lines?—They are going in for the natural enemy and poisoning.
122. *Mr. Lance.*] What about the factory?—That might be done away with. When in the Awatere, in December last, I asked why they did not kill the rabbits; I was told they were being kept for the factory. I think there are about eighty men engaged in trapping, who have killed somewhere about 520,000.
123. They cleared the country pretty well last year?—They had to go then into Taylor Pass. But the rabbits came in great numbers. After the men had been poisoning during the winter, and got them fairly under, they came on so that it seemed as if to rain rabbits.
124. The only way of stopping them is to fence?—Yes.
125. *Captain Russell.*] When you were telling us about the rabbits spreading so rapidly you apparently connected that fact with the natural enemy: do you want us to understand that the natural enemy caused the spreading?—The present Board are introducing the natural enemy.
126. Have you any theory as to how the rabbits spread: is it at all due to the introduction of dogs and ferrets?—Either will spread them about the country, for they must travel for their food.
127. Then, you do not wish to connect the fact of them spreading with the efforts made to destroy them?—No; not in any way.
128. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] Do you know the number of ferrets that have been let loose?—I do not know how many have been let loose, but lately there was a shipment of three hundred stoats and weasels arrived, and I think another shipment of two hundred are on their way, if they have not already arrived. I think there are about five hundred ready to be turned out now and in the spring. I do not know whether it is proposed to turn them out this spring.
129. *Mr. Lance.*] Then, at present, you think they are doing well?—At present; but I do not know whether they will do so well in the future. All the settlers are poisoning, but as soon as their funds are done they stop work.
130. *Mr. Kerr.*] In your opinion they ought to continue on?—I think they ought not to leave off altogether. When I was in the Wairarapa district I saw some splendid work done on Mr. Martin's estate at Martinborough.
131. *Mr. Dodson.*] Have you any theory in your mind as to where the Vernon rabbits come from? They do not breed there?—I was not over there last winter. Four years ago I noticed that after they had finished poisoning in the winter time all along the Renwick Road, after a couple of months, the rabbits came so numerous it seemed as if it had rained rabbits.
132. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] Have they acquired the habit of living in the bush?—There is no bush there.

Mr. CHARLES PHARAZYN examined.

133. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—Charles Pharazyn.
134. Would you state to the Committee what special evidence you have to bring forward?—Perhaps it would be better if I were to make a statement of facts which have come under my own special knowledge and personal experience.
135. Very well, Mr Pharazyn; I dare say that will be the best way?—Well, then, I will relate what I know. I have properties situated in South Wairarapa extending over about forty thousand acres, and it would be difficult to find any country which would be more suitable for the increase of rabbits. It is in many parts rough, like the country in the South Island where rabbits are so plentiful. One of these properties I purchased right in the middle of the rabbit-scare. Persons laughed at me, and ridiculed the idea of my ever coping with them. In one part of this property a man with a gun and dogs could kill eighty rabbits a day; so the Committee will see that they were pretty bad at that time. Some of us in the district at once recognised our position: we saw that we had a serious matter to deal with, that no time was to be lost, and that what we did should be of a methodical and permanent character. We saw others spending large sums of money every year without very good results. We therefore agreed to act on one line, and that was, to take such steps as would get rid of the pest without permanent annual cost, and those steps, I am happy to say, have been most successful. We said to ourselves, "Here is a grass-eating animal which must be dealt with by an animal living on flesh." We put everything on the land that would eat flesh—cats, ferrets, stoats, and weasels—encouraged hawks; in fact, look upon everything that would kill a rabbit as a being of considerable advantage to us. We carefully avoided one thing—we never would have the so-called "rabbiter;" we employed men more of the game-keeper class. We would have nothing to do with the "professional" rabbiter, who would, in most cases, be far more likely to destroy the natural enemy of the rabbit than the rabbit itself. Again, we never trapped,

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.

150. But the fact remains, that the rabbits never did increase on this property very much. That might, perhaps, be attributed to natural causes, or it might be owing to the introduction of ferrets?—It was not owing to natural causes, because it was dry, suitable land for rabbits to thrive upon; and, as I have said, they did increase very rapidly on parts, till checked by the ferrets.

151. Then, why do you think rabbits would increase elsewhere, notwithstanding ferrets being turned out?—Because the ferrets were chiefly trapped by rabbiters. No one can imagine the amount of mischief done by rabbiters. I am told that within the last month the Rabbit Agents have absolutely told owners of property that they must trap; but I would certainly check trapping as far as possible.

152. *Mr. Lance.*] Do you think the ferrets are killed to any extent by poisoned rabbits?—No; I do not think so.

153. It seems to me, Mr. Pharezyn, you have been very fortunate as regards the position of your property. I should not imagine, for instance, that you have been subjected to the great inundations of rabbits like many people in Otago?—Yes; I have been in just the same position. I remember on one occasion passing along a property in my district, and, looking on the side of a hill, I said to myself, “Would it be possible for me to fire a gun without hitting a rabbit,” and I came to the conclusion, after looking carefully, that it would be impossible; they were as thick as they possibly could be.

154. Are you aware that the Government are going to stop the breeding of ferrets this year? Do you think that will be a mistake?—I think such a course would be a public calamity. I remember about eight years ago writing a memorandum for the Government on this very subject, and I put it before the Chief Surveyor, Mr. McKerrow. I suggested that steps should be taken at once for the steady introduction of the natural enemy of the rabbits. I suggested that the Agent-General should give notice, on behalf of the New Zealand Government, to the effect that they would be purchasers for many years for weasels, stoats, and ferrets. Had that been carried out, I am convinced we should now have been cleared. If I had the power I would spend all the money that now goes in other ways in the direction of breeding and importing these animals, and any others which may be found suited to the wants of particular localities.

155. Do you think ferrets are killed off by distemper?—In some places they are subject to it.

156. Do you think it would be of advantage to the colony if science could in any way do something in the direction of staying this?—Yes; certainly I do.

157. Now, how do you find the Act works in your district?—I was just thinking yesterday, with regard to our district, we should have succeeded just as well without the Act. Not one of our people have ever been summoned. We have, of course, received formal notices, but, so far as I have been concerned, I have thrown these notices in the fire.

158. You have done what you considered was necessary?—Quite so.

159. Have you ever heard of any of the Inspectors giving orders as to the method to be used in getting rid of the rabbits, and insisting that those instructions should be strictly carried out?—I have never had any official orders myself, but in many cases the distinction between suggestions and orders is difficult to draw when it is known that a prosecution will follow any refusal.

160. In 1884 this Committee had strong evidence in this direction, and then most implicit instructions were issued that they were not to go on to property and say put on rabbiters?—It is, I believe, done now by making the sort of suggestions I have referred to.

161. *Mr. Walker.*] Do I understand you to say that some of the Inspectors have issued orders that you must trap?—I am not prepared to go quite so far as that. At any rate, I am not prepared to name any particular case.

162. *Hon. Sir G. Whitmore.*] No doubt your attention has been called, or, at any rate, you have seen a letter from a person in Australia who proposes killing off the male rabbits and leaving the females?—Yes.

163. Have you known anybody who has tried this?—No; I do not think anybody is likely to take that plan up. It would be quite impracticable, and I do not think there is any probability of any one trying it. It would be impossible, in fact, to carry out such a course on large blocks of rough country.

164. Have you ever known of anybody trying the experiment?—No; that I have not. I have only heard the proposal laughed at.

165. But you must be aware there are very concise details given as to the success of this plan, but you say it is not done?—No; I believe it is all nonsense; the female will always breed.

166. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Can you tell the Committee what number of ferrets you have turned out?—Probably not more than 1,000, and about 300 stoats and weasels, amongst us, on about 250,000 acres.

167. *Mr. Dodson.*] What length of time would that extend over?—About fourteen years.

168. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You are acquainted with the Brancepeth Estate?—Yes.

169. Do you know the number of ferrets that have been turned out on that estate alone?—Well, I should say nearly as many as have been turned out in the whole of our district put together.

170. Could you imagine it possible that in one district the distemper in ferrets had nearly exterminated them altogether, while in other districts it might not have done so?—That is possible, no doubt. In wet places, for instance, the ferrets would be more liable to the disease than in others.

171. I have seen the ferrets on my homestead so sickly that they could scarcely get out of the way, and disappearing altogether where they were previously very numerous?—What has struck me very forcibly on this question is that there is a marked difference between that land and ours. We have water in every little gully; in the country you refer to water is comparatively scarce, and the ferrets would not thrive so well in consequence. I do not think a ferret would, for instance, care to go to a dam for a drink if he could not find other water; he would very probably leave that part of the country and go to some other part where water was more plentiful.

172. Are you not aware that over the Brancepeth Estate there is water in a great number of the gullies?—Yes; in a great part of it there is, but obviously not where the dams are required.

173. Do you know the Glenburn Station, further up the coast?—Yes.

174. Can you give the Committee any idea, or suggest any reason, why the rabbits have not thrived in that part?—They have had ferrets there.

175. Have you known that ferrets were turned out there?—Yes; I believe some were turned out there some years ago.

176. But, as a matter of fact, are there any rabbits there now?—No; not many, I believe.

177. Have they turned out many ferrets in that district?—I do not know the number, but they and the stoats and weasels have probably spread up the coast.

178. Are you aware, going further north, that rabbits are numerous, notwithstanding the fact that ferrets have been turned out?—Yes; but they have either trapped or employed rabbiters, or both.

179. Now, as to the trapping: you have heard, perhaps, that I have been in the habit of trapping on my place?—Yes.

180. Have you any idea as to what extent and under what circumstances?—No; but no doubt you would have carried it out with care—you would not trust any strange men. I can say I tried trapping on the coast, and within a few days the report came in that the men got as many ferrets as rabbits. This was an honest man—one that I could rely upon—and we stopped trapping at once. If this man had been an ordinary rabbitier we should have known nothing about it. I am quite certain I should soon have found the rabbits increasing.

181. Are you personally aware whether trapping is being carried on to any extent in the Wairarapa now or not?—They have been checking it this season, I believe; but last year there was a great deal of it done.

182. What we want is satisfactory information on this point?—I do not know any particular place where it is carried on to any great extent just now. During the last two or three years there was considerable trapping, and this goes far to explain the decrease of ferrets.

183. Speaking of poisoning: have you seen many dead birds about in consequence of this poisoning?—Of which kind?

184. Larks?—No, I do not think so.

185. Any dead cats or ferrets?—No; but I notice pheasants and paradise ducks have disappeared; you do not see them now nearly so thick as before. These, no doubt, have been poisoned.

186. In some of the recommendations by the Inspectors, they recommend that rabbit-netting should be made a legal fence: do you know this to be so?—Yes.

187. I have gathered from your remarks that this would be a bad course to adopt?—Yes; I think it would be almost useless, and most unjust. It would mean ruination to the small settler. It would suit me well enough if the power was given; but I should be sorry for the small settler outside, who might be put to a great expense with no advantage to himself.

188. *Mr. Dodson.*] How far had the rabbits spread over this property where you told us some time ago a man could kill eighty a day?—On the verge of the country they were as thick as I have described, and, more or less, all over it.

189. Just in small parts only; not over any extent of country?—No; very numerous in some parts, less so in others.

190. Were there many places on your property where the rabbits were so thick as the place you have referred to?—No.

191. When they were so thick that a man could kill eighty a day was about twelve years ago?—Yes.

192. Did you at first begin by turning out ferrets in small numbers?—Yes.

193. And you have carried on that plan up to the present time?—No; I have turned no ferrets out for the last two years; I have trusted to the natural increase, and have been entirely satisfied with the result. In fact, my mind is quite easy in regard to the rabbit-scare.

194. In addition to ferrets, have you turned out stoats and weasels?—No; but my neighbour has, and they have spread.

195. And you have a very decided opinion that wire netting is against the interests of the small settler?—Quite so; besides being, in most cases, an unnecessary expense to the large one.

196. And your opinion has been gathered from practical experience; but, on the other hand, the Inspectors recommend to the contrary?—It does not say much for their knowledge.

197. *Hon. Mr. Robinson.*] Then, I understand from your remarks that the people in your district are better judges, and have a better knowledge as to the best mode of keeping down the rabbits; in fact, they act independently, and know best what to do?—Yes.

198. And that acting privately, altogether free from the interference of the Inspectors, is, in your opinion, more conducive to the destruction of rabbits?—Yes; though it generally takes time to learn what is really best. All the Inspector has to do is to compel negligent owners to act.

199. *Mr. Anderson.*] I should like to know more about the character of this land: you say its rough country?—The coast-run is rough and shingly, with loose stones—just the kind of land, in my opinion, that rabbits thrive upon.

200. What do you think of fluke in a colder climate, like the South, for instance? Do you consider it could be applied there with success?—It might help to check the rabbit from spreading, but it is not, in my opinion, sufficient of itself.

201. Have you any knowledge of the disease that is said to have spread in some parts of Canada?—All I know of it is that it is of the form of fluke.

202. *Mr. Lawry.*] Do you think in the course of time the increase of rabbits, in many parts of New Zealand, will render the increase of ferrets necessary?—Yes; I should certainly say so, because the moment you get rid of the vermin the rabbit increases. As an instance of this, I may tell

the Committee that when I was in England I visited a place in Cornwall, when I saw rabbits as thick as ever I saw them in any place in New Zealand. This place had been neglected, the vermin only destroyed, and the consequence was as I have stated.

203. You consider, then, that vermin is preferable to poisoning?—Yes; if looked after and distributed in a systematic manner, as we have done in the Wairarapa. No one can tell the comfort we experience now. I have no anxiety or fear of rabbits ever overrunning my place. I may say the same of all my neighbours.

204. In other words, the introduction of vermin has relieved you of all anxiety?—That is so.

205. You say that you used phosphorus in your poisoning?—Yes.

206. That is not a blood poison?—No.

207. I was informed by a person in Otago that he picked up poisoned rabbits, and, after taking out the stomachs, fed his pigs with them: do you not think that Mr. Buchanan's theory with regard to the larks is a correct one?—Yes; it is quite probable that the ferret eating the whole lark, including entrails, may be poisoned; but I do not think the cost is very great.

208. *Mr. Lance.*] Now, about the position of this land: is it bounded on one side by the sea?—Yes; one part of one property.

209. *Mr. Lawry.*] And you believe that the settlers individually can do more for themselves than from Government assistance?—Yes; of course, there may be times when Government assistance does good, but, taking the whole question from a broad point of view, more good has been done by the direction and energy of the settlers themselves—at any rate, that is so up in our part.

210. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Do you believe in trapping?—No; but, of course, there are extreme cases when it would do good—for instance, Mr. Buchanan traps, but, being a careful man, he would not make the mistake that others have. I do not go quite so far as to say trapping should be prohibited by law, but I think it should only be resorted to in special cases, and then with extreme care.

211. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Now, I have a block of bush of about 400 or 500 acres. This place is so thick with underscrub that it is a perfect nest for rabbits. I cannot work it with dogs and gun, and, if poisoning is out of the question in summer, would your objection to trapping go so far as to stop it in such places?—I should think the natural enemy the right thing in such a case, aided by poison in winter; but, of course, you may have good reason to trap. I have no doubt that if you do so you are careful who you trust.

212. You are perfectly satisfied that, if your operations were carried on systematically in Canterbury and Otago, it would be successful?—If the same principle were carried out—that is, by introducing the natural enemy—you must get rid of the rabbit in any particular part of the country, but no doubt a different enemy is suitable to different places. I consider the most important thing this Committee can do is to find out why ferrets appear not to thrive on some places, and what flesh-eating animals will. There are a large variety of forms of life all more or less suited to our requirements, and the great thing is to get the right one in the right place.

THURSDAY, 15th AUGUST, 1889.

Mr. HANDYSIDE examined.

213. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—John Stewart Handyside.

214. Will you give this Committee any general knowledge which you possess in regard to the rabbit question?—I will tell you what I know of the rabbits about where I have been. I have been in the north end of Wairarapa for about seven years. When I first went up there you could only see them in one's or two's; there were not many then. Now, however, they have been increasing. On the north side of Akiteo River there are not many. If you walk about without dogs you will not see one. If you have dogs you might put up one or two; they are merely there in one's and two's. On the south side, just close to the river itself, there are a few, and as you get further south they are more numerous, and in some places very thick. On the other side of the Aohanga River the rabbits are pretty thick. They had a very favourable season, which, no doubt, has accounted for their increase.

215. What means have been adopted there to keep them in check?—Well, on the north side the only means used has been by dogs and shooting.

216. No traps been used?—No.

217. Any of the natural enemy turned out?—Only in a very limited way: the chief way has been by dogs and shooting. A few ferrets were turned out.

218. Do you think it would be advisable to turn any out?—Yes; I think it would be very beneficial, but I think the land would have to be poisoned as well.

219. You do not think the employment of rabbiters would be the best means?—Not with dogs or traps, after the natural enemy had been turned out.

220. We have had strong opinions expressed here by witnesses against the use of traps?—I think those expressions were true.

221. *Mr. Lance.*] You have not many ferrets, you say. Are you on the boundary of the fence that divides Wairarapa from Hawke's Bay?—No; not quite.

222. But you know what has been done there?—Yes; I am myself interested in some property in the Hawke's Bay side.

223. Has that fence done good work?—Yes; I consider the fence has done very good work indeed. I think scarcely a rabbit has got over.

224. The Inspector, in his report of the 3rd May, I think, says that the fence has proved of great protection to the Hawke's Bay side: have you any idea how the rabbits got on the north side?—The Maoris carried the rabbits up to Porangahau. There are no rabbits on the country where the fence is.

225. Do you know that there is a provision in the Act against persons carrying rabbits?—No, I was not aware.

226. The penalty for such an offence is a fine of £50, but no imprisonment. Now, what would be the good of fining a swagger £50, because you cannot send him to gaol?—For my part, I do not think the rabbits are carried over by swaggers. I fancy the Maori is more to blame.

227. Now, do not you think there should be a penalty as well as imprisonment for persons carrying rabbits about the country?—Certainly; the class of men who take rabbits are not moneyed men.

228. The Inspector in your country says the rabbits are very numerous: how do you account for that?—Because a great many of the settlers have slackened off keeping the rabbits down during the summer.

229. With their poisoning?—No.

230. You have been a great deal about lately, but you have seen no rabbits about Akiteo?—No.

231. There must have been good poisoning done there?—Yes; I should say so.

232. Does the Act work well? Do you find it works satisfactorily?—Yes.

233. Have you had much experience with Rabbit Boards?—No.

234. Is it true one is being formed in your district?—Yes; I believe so. I do not trouble much about it myself. I should be in favour of the formation of a Rabbit Board, and I should go in for importing ferrets, stoats, and weasels. I think a Board, working together with the Inspector, would do good work.

235. Would they carry out the duties at present carried out by Inspectors?—All I can say is I think the Inspectors would be better by having help from some one.

236. Then, do you think the district Inspector should have a seat on the Board?—Yes.

237. Then, you are of opinion it would be a good thing to form Rabbit Boards with rating powers only, so that you might get a subsidy for getting the natural enemy?—Quite so.

238. That the Board would have nothing to do except with regard to turning out the natural enemies?—Yes. I should be satisfied with that. Such an arrangement would relieve the Board of a lot of responsibility. I believe it would work very well, provided, of course, good officers were obtained.

239. *Mr. Buchanan.*] With regard to the fence between Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay, there is a gate next to the beach: is that sometimes left open?—No; the gate will not stay open at all. No rabbit can get through, and there is a man who looks after the gate, and he sees it is kept greased so that the latch closes.

240. But the rabbits could get through at night?—No. There are no rabbits there to get through. The man who looks after the gate keeps dogs, and there is never a rabbit seen.

241. But, taking the whole line of fence, do you conceive it possible that there may be openings where rabbits could get through?—Of course, if a tree fell across it would make an opening.

242. Some time ago you said the rabbits in your part were very scarce; that you only saw them in one's and two's?—Yes.

243. And they have spread considerably lately, and it will only be a question of time for them to get on the other side of the fence?—Yes; unless they are checked.

244. Then, there should be men on both sides of the fence looking after them?—Yes.

245. It would just be a question of time for the rabbits on the north side to be as bad as on the south, unless looked after?—That is my opinion.

246. You know, do you not, that in several centres of the Hawke's Bay District tame rabbits were let loose some years ago?—Yes.

247. And they have not been increasing to any extent, have they?—Yes, I think so.

248. Do you know that there are a few rabbits on the Kidnappers?—Yes; plenty.

249. But they were the progeny of the tame ones?—That might be so.

250. Would you be prepared to recommend that rabbit-netting should be compulsory?—Well, I should like it myself very much. It would suit me. I should very much like my neighbours to be compelled to put it up. It would be, I think, a good thing for the country.

251. Have you pictured to yourself the probable cost of such a thing if it became law?—No; but I know it cost me £200 a mile in some of my rough country.

252. *Mr. Dodson.*] Have you any idea how the small settler would be affected by making it a legal fence?—I should think it would fall very heavy on him.

253. You do not speak strongly for it?—I would speak strongly for it from my own point of view. I know it would be a hardship to some of my neighbours.

254. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You think it would be a good thing if the wire fencing were made legal?—Yes.

255. But I understand you to say it would be a hardship to the smaller man?—Yes.

256. *Mr. Duncan.*] I believe there is a considerable area of Crown lands joining your property?—Yes.

257. And you think there was not sufficient care taken there to keep down the rabbits?—They poisoned once a year, but nothing afterwards.

258. What is the character of the land?—It is mostly light bush and scrub, with small openings or clearings through it; manuka and heavy bush further back.

259. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] Is the country occupied at the back?—Yes; partly. There are about 100,000 acres not occupied. It is occupied about fourteen miles up the Aohanga. Further up the valley the country gets rougher, and it is not occupied at all.

260. *Mr. Dodson.*] Is the country at the extreme back suitable for settlement?—Yes; very suitable indeed.

261. Have you ever known rabbits to take up on scrub country?—Yes; but I think where you have heavy bush timber you will not find many rabbits.

262. Will you state the probable cost of clearing these Crown lands of scrub?—About 15s. per acre.
263. *Mr. Anderson.*] Are you of opinion that the Government should continue to keep on the Inspectors?—Yes; I think it would be an auxiliary. I do not think the settlers could do it themselves.
264. Do you think they will ever get the pest down?—No; I do not, entirely.
265. *Mr. Lawry.*] Are you of opinion that the formation of a Rabbit Board would have the effect of keeping down the rabbits in this Crown lands country?—I do not think so.
266. You say they are increasing on these Crown lands. They are only poisoning once a year: is that, in your opinion, sufficient?—No; the thing wants following up. If you only poison once a year and do nothing else you will soon be overrun with rabbits.
267. Are we to understand that there is no provision compelling the Government to keep down rabbits on these Crown lands?—I believe that is the case.
268. In your opinion, have the Government taken the same precaution as the ordinary settler?—No; they fail to follow up after poisoning.
269. *Mr. Anderson.*] Have you ever known instances where ferrets have attacked young lambs?—No; I have not.

THURSDAY, 15TH AUGUST, 1889.

Mr. MACRAE examined.

270. *Hon the Chairman.*] What is your name?—MacRae.
271. Can you give this Committee any information about the rabbits in your district?—
272. First of all, what part are you residing at?—At Bowland's, belonging to Mr. Levin.
273. What extent of property is that?—About 13,000 acres.
274. How long have you been there?—About sixteen months.
275. Were there many rabbits when you first went there?—Yes; there were a great many.
276. In your opinion, are they increasing or decreasing?—I fancy they are much about the same as when I first went there—that is, taking the season before poisoning—now they are considerably less.
277. What means are you adopting to keep them down?—Having the country thoroughly poisoned, and then following up with dogs and trapping.
278. Have you turned out any of the natural enemy?—No; none lately. There were a few ferrets turned out some time ago, but not many.
279. Do you consider that the employment of rabbiters is preferable to the natural enemy?—No; I should not say so.
280. Would you prefer the natural enemy yourself?—Yes; most certainly.
281. Then, why have not the natural enemy been used?—I do not exactly know; perhaps the expense. With the exception of a few ferrets, none have been turned out.
282. The trapping would tend to destroy the ferrets, would it not?—Yes, to a certain extent it would.
283. Then, you depend principally upon poisoning and following up with dogs afterwards?—Yes.
284. *Mr. Lance.*] The Government are about stopping the breeding of ferrets this year: do you think it would be to the benefit of the colony if the breeding was encouraged?—Yes; providing that stoats were turned out as well in the country. That would, I am sure, be advantageous to the colony.
285. How has the Rabbit Act worked with you generally?—It has acted fairly well.
286. Do the Inspectors come round and visit your property?—Yes.
287. Do they tell you what you are to do?—No; they have not interfered with me. I always keep on a sufficient number of men, and when I knock them off I go on with the usual poisoning.
288. To what do you attribute the increase of rabbits in the Wairarapa?—To the dry season, there being little or no rain, and, in consequence, none of the young rabbits have been drowned.
289. If you had had a number of ferrets turned out, do you think you would have had that increase?—They certainly would help, but I am not so much in favour of ferrets as of stoats and weasels.
290. Have you this disease known as the bladder-worm?—Yes; I have seen it myself on a few odd rabbits, but I cannot say it has done much good.
291. *Mr. Buchanan.*] I understand you have had some experience with rabbits before you came to Bowland's?—Yes; at Akiteo, and also in Otago.
292. *Mr. Lance.*] What part of Otago?—The Manuhukia district.
293. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Do you consider that the work of inspection is not being carried on with sufficient stringency?—I do not think it is.
294. Do you consider that that is owing to there being an insufficient number of Inspectors, or that the Inspectors have not got thoroughly hold of the idea of what really is being carried out?—There is a difference of opinion about it. Whether it is that they do not go over the country often enough or not I cannot say. You will not find three people holding the same ideas. Some poison, and do not employ men to follow the work up, and where wire netting is not used as a boundary-fence rabbits are bound to come into the country you have cleared.
295. In other words, in your opinion, the Act is not put into operation with sufficient stringency?—Yes; that is my opinion.
296. During last summer, are you of opinion that the Inspectors should have taken some action against those persons who did nothing at all?—Yes, certainly; I think they ought to have.

297. In other words, by the neglect of the Inspectors, by not compelling persons to take the necessary steps, the rabbits in many places have increased?—Yes; I think the Inspectors should have compelled owners of property in many instances to have employed more hands.

298. Did you ever hear of those who tried to do their best last year failing on account of those who did not do their duty?—Yes.

299. Was this the case to a large extent in the Wairarapa last summer?—I could not exactly say. I was not over all the district. I know of parts where the work was not properly carried out.

300. Where the Inspectors had been doing nothing?—They might be doing something; but there were places where they were not using sufficient means in doing as much as they might have done.

301. In regard to winter and autumn, do you think the necessary steps were taken soon enough?—Yes; I think so.

302. Are you of opinion that good work was done this winter?—Yes; all over our part of the country it has been very successful.

303. Were there not a large number of ferrets turned out by Mr. Hawkins at Bowlands?—There has not been more than three hundred turned out there altogether, to my knowledge.

304. Are you not afraid of destroying ferrets by trapping?—Yes; if they had been numerous I should have discontinued trapping, but as they were not I used what I considered the best means. It was on country where there were a great many watercourses that I trapped chiefly.

305. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Did you ever catch a diseased rabbit in the trap?—I have heard of an odd one, but not many.

306. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] Do you use your own discretion in working the rabbits or do you act under instruction from the Inspector?—I act according to my own discretion.

307. You have not recommended the introduction of the natural enemy?—Yes; I have recommended the introduction of the natural enemy some months ago.

308. At the time you went on the country, you say, the rabbits were pretty thick?—Yes.

309. What means have been used to keep them down?—The country has been partly poisoned, and four men were employed trapping afterwards; but they had not poisoned the whole of the country the winter before I went there.

310. You said you could not do much without wire netting: are you in favour of it?—Yes, I am, if your neighbour has a number of rabbits. The netting in that instance keeps your neighbour's rabbits from coming through.

311. But you do not consider it a complete remedy?—No.

312. Do you think wire netting should be made compulsory?—Yes, I do.

313. *Mr. Anderson.*] Have you every confidence in wire netting staying the influx of rabbits from one colony of rabbits to another?—Yes; providing the netting is kept in thorough repair.

314. Has the Inspector, to your knowledge, ever dictated to the settlers the best means to be used for the destruction of rabbits?—No. I never heard him dictate to the settlers.

315. He has never told you?—No.

Mr. C. PHILLIPS examined.

316. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—Coleman Phillips.

317. Will you give this Committee a sketch of any information you have in regard to the destruction of rabbits?—Yes; I think, perhaps, I had better tell you what has been done in South Wairarapa.

318. Yes, if you please; of your own experience?—Well, we commenced in 1884 by adopting the simplest measures we knew of to suppress the pest. We formed ourselves into a voluntary Rabbit Board, and I suggested to the settlers and asked them to carry out the measures which I then proposed. I drafted the measures to be used, and they have been successful. The first one was simultaneous rabbit poisoning, which we all agreed to do on the 1st June; the next was turning out the natural enemy—that is, all natural enemies we knew of, including cats, ferrets, stoats, and weasels; the next was a systematic hunting with dog and gun by the settlers after turning out the natural enemy; and, lastly, came the appearance of the disease (bladder-worm). You may really say there were five methods—first, the formation of a voluntary Rabbit Board; second, systematic poisoning; third, turning out the natural enemy; fourth, steady hunting; and fifth, the disease. These were the methods used in South Wairarapa for the suppression of the pest. Two things we set our faces dead against—that was, trapping and the erection of wire netting. The Committee may not be aware of the dangers of trapping, but it is specially noticeable in this way: Supposing a rabbit sets fifty or sixty traps a day, and is always catching rabbits, which is generally the case, these traps in time become “blooded,” and in that way attract all natural enemies which may be about the district—cats, dogs, ferrets, stoats, and weasels are attracted by the smell, and all come up to this place and scratch, and, of course, many are caught. With my plan, I believe, you can get the rabbits down to a minimum of safety, beyond which stage they will never be reduced.

319. What do you mean by a minimum of safety?—Nature's balance. No matter what means you may use, whether the turning out of the natural enemy or any other mode, you can never exterminate the rabbit. You will find this to be the case in every other country. Now, perhaps you would like to know something about the disease. First of all, I may say that I find traps fatal to the object for which they were intended; and I object altogether to wire netting. In North Wairarapa a totally opposite course was adopted from ours—rabbit-netting was relied upon; few natural enemies were turned out; and no dogs were used or proper hunting done. The settlers there, I believe, objected to that. What is the result? Looking at the north, as one instance: the rabbits

there are most numerous, while in the south we are comparatively free. Now, with regard to the disease. It is pretty well everywhere, both north and south, in the Wairarapa. In the evidence I gave last year on this subject—some of the Committee may perhaps remember—I pointed out that in North America and some other parts of the world the rabbits were cleared by this disease. Dr. Hector first told me of it, after I called his attention to the disease in the Wairarapa, and he agreed that it was the same as the American disease. In February last millions of jack-rabbits were crossing the frozen Snake River into Oregon. But the result would be that the disease would sweep them off. Every now and then the disease breaks out. In North America it is carried about by wolves and foxes. If the Committee remember, the Hon. Randall Johnson, when Chairman of the last Rabbit Committee, said that it had been proposed to introduce the civet-cat and ground-wolf, but I do not think it would be judicious. I would ask that this paper upon the question [produced], which was read before the Wellington Philosophical Society last year, should be incorporated in my evidence which has not been printed yet. As to the exterminating powers of the disease, it does not exterminate. I never claimed that it did. It acts very slowly, but it is of great assistance after you have poisoned and turned out the natural enemy. It keeps the minimum at its minimum, and checks the rabbit breeding up again so quickly. There is something I should like to say as to the danger of sheep getting this disease (bladder-worm). Sheep do not carry this disease, but sheep-fluke, or rot, sometimes decimates the rabbit. After returning from Napier, quite lately, I should like to record what I saw on Mr. Ormond's and Mr. Williams's properties there. I saw the sheep-yards full of sturdied sheep. There are no rabbits, bear in mind, in the vicinity of Hastings. The men were getting the sheep in by the cart-load, and the yards were covered with the struggling sheep. Had other causes not been prevalent in Napier, it might have been said this sheep disease came from the rabbits; but there are none in the vicinity as yet. I do not know what caused this sheep disease in Napier at the present time, but there are no rabbits there. But I found in the Hawke's Bay Province generally that their boasted rabbit-fence was almost useless. Upon every large run away from Hastings there were rabbits. I would also say that, unless properly worked, the bladder-worm (it is quite wrong to call it fluke) does not appear to act. In North Wairarapa the bladder-worm is everywhere. I was speaking to a witness, Mr. MacRae, who gave his evidence here. I asked him if he found it any good, and he replied, "That it killed a few, but it was not much good." That is the general opinion everywhere. But if people carried out the same measures as I did they would find the great benefit of the disease, and that they would get the upper hand of the rabbits. I wish to state that, in my opinion, the Rabbit Inspectors do a very great deal of harm. One of them says that wire fencing should be made a legal fence. Some of the Inspectors insist that traps should be used, and some settlers are actually refusing to do so. One of the Inspectors—the chief—is now traversing the measures I took which were so successful in getting down the nuisance. I should also say these two things: There is no power whatever to prevent every acre of land in New Zealand passing under the rabbits' feet. I believe every acre must be visited sooner or later. I would also say that rabbit-fences, in my opinion, do a great deal of harm, more especially in a badly-infested district.

320. You object to traps?—Yes.

321. You say that the Inspectors in some cases approve of them?—Yes.

322. Have they not the power to say so?—If a sheep-farmer does not do as they foolishly wish he is summoned. The Inspectors require checking locally, which our voluntary Rabbit Board did. So that it follows that upon a proper method of local government depends rabbit suppression. This I have always urged upon my fellow settlers' attention.

323. Is there any case that you are aware of where a sheep-farmer has been summoned?—I have not heard of one yet for not using traps. He is summoned on the broad grounds that the rabbits are not put down.

324. After you turned out the natural enemy, you say, you hunt with dogs?—Yes.

325. And shoot?—Yes.

326. Do you think the rabbiters shoot the natural enemy?—Ferrets, stoats, and weasels do not show themselves much in the daytime. As to killing, it is a rather difficult thing to take a ferret out of a trap. It is far easier to knock him on the head and kill him: that is more often done than the ferret shot. The dogs sometimes kill a stray ferret, but I do not mind that.

327. One reason of your hunting is distributing this disease?—Entirely so; and also keeping the pest down.

328. Have you known of any case where the natural enemy has been poisoned by eating dead rabbits?—A few ferrets may have been so poisoned, but very few; more die from distemper.

329. It was stated here that the ferret may be poisoned by eating birds and cats, whereas they might eat rabbits which were not affected except in the stomach?—Yes; but I have not a very great deal of faith in ferrets; they are most useful, but not to be entirely relied upon. We find very few on the run; they die of distemper. I am always turning them out.

330. Have you turned out stoats and weasels?—No; but Mr. Riddiford did.

331. Do they increase?—Well, I could not say. They have been found thirty or forty miles from where they were let out, but none have been found in my neighbourhood. In my immediate neighbourhood we reduced the pest without the aid of stoats and weasels.

332. Do you pin your faith to the bladder-worm?—No, I do not. I believe in the five measures I have already told you—the establishment of proper Rabbit Boards, turning out natural enemies, hunting all the year round, poisoning, and the distribution of the disease.

333. Does not Professor Thomas say that this disease is not communicable through ferrets?—I do not think so. I want to get that fact myself. The experiments, I think, were not complete. I believe that the ferret does distribute the worm. It is a wormy animal.

334. You are aware that Dr. Hector took over one of these diseased rabbits?—Yes; I am aware what the Sydney Conference decided about it. The result of that Conference was very poor indeed.

335. You saw the report?—Yes; I saw the report and the two rabbits—the one that M. Pasteur's representatives tried to kill by chicken cholera microbes, and the Wairarapa rabbit that Sir J. Hector took over.

336. *Mr. Lance.*] And yours was looking well?—Yes; he had been there three months. He had a hump on his back as big as my fist.

337. It was very large when he started?—It was much larger after he got there. I was quite satisfied with the progress of the disease. The disease is slow and sure enough.

338. You say the Hawke's Bay fence is no use at all?—It has not kept the rabbits out.

339. Have you any authority for saying that rabbits have got through?—No. Some gentlemen were fined living a hundred miles away.

340. Were rabbits on that ground before the fence was erected?—I believe a few rabbits were turned out there.

341. Well, but we know for certain that rabbits were there before the fence was erected. • In 1874 Mr. McKerrow saw rabbits on the north side?—Then, if the rabbits are there, what is the use of the fence?

342. You have said this fence is of no use: have you any proof that rabbits have got through since?—No; I have not. I have not been close alongside the fence. A fence is a costly piece of business.

343. You are not to consider the expense of a remedy?—Excuse me, but I must do so in regard to its efficacy.

344. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] In your opinion, are fences no good?—Well, that is a sweeping assertion to make, but I make it.

345. Well, take a peninsula, for instance, where there is a narrow neck of land, surely a fence across such a place would be of great protection, if not an absolute protection?—Yes; in that case, where the expense would not be great, it might be useful; but take the case of a narrow neck between the lakes, a fence there would be no good, because the rabbit would get round the lakes.

346. *Captain Russell.*] You have said that rabbit-fencing has done a positive harm?—Yes.

347. In what way?—It prevents the spread of the bladder-worm. It is far better to spread the disease, and turn out the natural enemy. There are a lot of instances where bad settlers have kept the rabbits going. My argument is, you should never fence your run. You must assist your neighbour in putting down the rabbits; a fence stops that. Selfish action in the matter of this rabbit-pest is the very worst kind of action. A man having a bad neighbour should not fence him off, but assist him in clearing out the bad spots. A fence stops that. The bad neighbour may not have the means to cope with the pest, or he may not have the energy. The good neighbour must supply those omissions. Lift the fences of a badly-infested district, adopt proper measures, stop trapping, and then the energy of the good settlers will be felt over the whole district. I speak now of a badly-infested district, like North Wairarapa has of late become. But the Canterbury fence may check the rabbits for a while, at a great cost though.

348. You told us when you were in Hawke's Bay you found the uselessness of this fence: who gave you this information?—I judged it was so from what I saw and heard from the settlers.

349. Did you converse with the Chairman of the Rabbit Board?—No. It makes no difference to me whether the rabbits come through the fence or not. If the rabbits are there the fence is no good. There will be plenty more there in time, fence or no fence.

350. Did you hear from anybody how many rabbits had been killed on the north side of the fence?—There is a difficulty in mentioning names. I do not think I heard for certain. There were a fair number being killed. The Hawke's Bay settlers had better not rely upon their fence.

351. Supposing that the greater number of residents in the district say the fence is a complete success, would you modify your opinion?—I regret to say, no.

352. You said that a gentleman was summoned living a hundred miles away from the fence?—Yes.

353. Are you aware that rabbits were turned out by Mr. Tanner about thirty years ago?—Yes; by somebody; I did not know it was Mr. Tanner.

354. And these rabbits are the offspring?—Yes.

355. And nothing to do with the fence?—They may have. I cannot say. They may have come round by the Ruahine.

356. Well, have they anything to do with the erection of the fence?—I simply say that New Zealand was a clean country till the rabbit was brought here. It is here now. It makes no difference how it came. What we have to do is to get rid of it, and fencing will not do that.

357. What I am anxious for you to say is this: in your opinion, are the rabbits increasing rapidly there?—I say they are increasing.

358. Where—in Howke's Bay?—On the confines and pumice-stone country, up towards Wai-kato.

359. Not in Hawke's Bay?—I have been told so. I heard that swaggers had brought rabbits on some of the runs.

360. Do you know that you cannot purchase a rabbit in a shop there?—I think you are pretty clean as yet.

361. Then, is it not reasonable to suppose that the fence has done some good?—I hold a contrary opinion. I have such an objection to it that I cannot believe in it.

362. Supposing you surrounded a property with a stone wall: would that be of any use?—I have often thought that if you surrounded a property with a stone wall sunk 2ft. into the ground that that might be effectual in keeping out the rabbit. As expense is not to be considered, the settlers of New Zealand had better begin erecting such walls at once. It would be difficult crossing watercourses, road-lines, &c., with them; but the plan might be tried. But, of course, the rabbits can be got under in the inexpensive manner I tried and succeeded with.

363. Mr. Charles Pharazyn, in his evidence, said he would allow no hunting at all: he saw no use in it: has Mr. Pharazyn had any experience?—None himself, with dogs. He only knows from what his managers have told him. I do not think that he has had the same experience that I have had on this particular thing.

364. You live in Wairarapa?—Yes.

365. The fact is that Mr. Pharazyn's property is clear?—Yes.

366. Was it clear to begin with?—No; it was very bad. He put up a short piece of rabbit-fence with Mr. Riddiford, and the run got very bad. Rabbits were numerous upon both sides of the fence. This made us think then that fencing was no good.

367. *Mr. Buchanan.*] I was not here when you commenced your evidence: how many of the natural enemy did you turn out?—About 120 to 140.

368. Taking your neighbour's land into account, about how many were turned out in your district?—About 1,000 to 1,200 ferrets, 300 stoats and weasels, and a lot of cats. Mr. Martin turned out more than anybody else.

369. How many did Mr. Waterhouse turn out?—Six.

370. You are acquainted with Brancepeth?—Yes.

371. What is the acreage?—About 60,000 acres.

372. Have they turned out ferrets?—Yes.

373. How many?—About 1,000 or 1,200.

374. Do you know of any other settlers in the district who turned out ferrets?—I think about 1,500 were turned out in the north part altogether—Messrs. Maunsel, Hawkins, Andrews, and Elder, and others.

375. They had men breeding ferrets by contract, had they not?—Yes.

376. Have you any reason to say that the number turned out in North Wairarapa were limited to 1,500 or 2,000?—No; only from an estimate I made.

377. How do you account for the ferrets doing so little good in North Wairarapa compared to the South?—Because they were trapped in the North. I think some four hogsheads of traps went up to North Wairarapa, which entirely accounts for the state of the rabbits there now. The more traps, the more rabbits.

378. Well, taking my neighbourhood, for instance: you know I have been using traps?—Yes.

379. Do you know to what extent?—I know you were trapping some bush country. I regarded you as the only trapper in our district. You are aware that I have always said that any person using traps commits a penal offence.

380. Can you name any others who trapped to any extent?—Messrs. Hawkins, Stuckey, Whatman, and Hoskings.

381. Then, coming south, to my district?—Mr. Beetham, I think, traps a little, but I am not certain. I know of no one else below you.

382. But in the big block of country: do you know of any one except myself?—No; not below you.

383. Does it not seem extraordinary that in a smaller block in South Wairarapa, where 1,000 ferrets were turned out, the rabbits are much more numerous than in the large block, where only 1,500 were turned out: how do you account for it?—I do not quite understand this question; but you have been using rabbit-fencing, and we did not: none of us believed in it then. I might also say here that Mr. Huddleston, from the Lakes, told me that there was some run down South having 500 dogs at one time. These dogs scattered the bladder-worm all over the district, and the rabbits disappeared. They have increased again, because the dogs were sent away, and fresh hordes of rabbits came in from the back country.

384. Are you aware that Mr. Beetham employed, or, rather, had, 200 or 300 dogs?—Yes; I think he had; and I am also aware that he caught a great number of diseased rabbits.

385. Speaking of fluke: you have given the Committee to understand that river-water is necessary?—Yes; moisture is necessary.

386. Then, how do you account for some of the dry places in Australia being so much affected with it?—You mean the sheep-fluke? I do not know; I cannot explain it. There must, of course, be some favourable circumstance attending it, otherwise it would not spread. Sheep-fluke generally spreads on low river-bottoms, and is a very virulent disease, although the animal at first fattens upon it. So the rabbit thrives when it first has bladder-worm. But this rabbit disease does not harm sheep in England or America. I do not think it can do so. Sheep-fluke, though, may decimate the rabbit. Because settlers see a diseased rabbit healthy and fat they think the disease no good; they forget that sheep fatten for three or four months upon its own fluke disease, but when it once falls away it never recovers again. The same thing occurs with the rabbit.

387. *Mr. Duncan.*] I understand from you that you would advocate spending money in some other way than erecting wire fences?—Yes; you will unfailingly put the rabbits down by following the measures I have adopted.

388. *Mr. Laury.*] Then, I understand you believe more in the united efforts by the settlers themselves: you think such a course better than acting according to the Government Inspectors' instructions?—Yes; I believe the Government Inspectors are doing a great amount of harm.

389. Was Mr. Pharazyn a member of your voluntary Rabbit Board?—No; he was not. He was in England.

390. And you have been successful in exterminating rabbits in South Wairarapa, while, on the other hand, they have increased in the North?—Yes; that is so.

391. Are the conditions as favourable in one part as in another?—Yes.

392. And if they had carried out the same measures they would have been equally successful?—Yes. I will guarantee to clear all my neighbours in the North Wairarapa if they will follow out my measures—that is, with united action.

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?—

I would not stop it. I believe they do their share when they get in a wild state. My experience is that in the winter months they travel to a warmer place. I have known them to come from over the hills and take up their quarters in the kitchen. I do not think you would find stoats and weasels doing that.

419. Do you think ferrets are worth to the country the money which the Government have paid for them?—I should say to the contrary; but that may be for want of proper experience.

420. *Captain Russell.*] You told us just now you had to shut off 700 acres: if it had been made a legal fence, how would you look at it?—It is a very difficult thing to decide. I suppose it would be like all other fences—you will have to give and take.

421. Suppose you had two neighbours who would not agree to the line of fence, would not the line of fence, under those circumstances, be somewhat different to an ordinary fence?—I do not know; I have it put up in a very awkward piece of country. It would have to be done under the give-and-take system.

422. Well, suppose that the wire fence was legal, how would it affect the small settler?—It would have to be done under the give-and-take line.

423. *Hon. Mr. Pharaayn.*] Do you find the Inspectors persevering in your district?—Yes; I think so. They have always been attentive. I have no fault to find with them. They have troubled me very little lately.

424. We have had it stated that they are in a measure mischievous?—That is not my experience.

425. I suppose it depends upon the people?—Yes. I have not given the department any trouble as to any increase in rabbits. I know if I did not keep the rabbits down they would very soon keep me down, and I work accordingly. There are now comparatively very few, except in one portion of the run.

426. They did not suggest any other method than that you were using?—No.

427. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Over the bulk of your country, where there are no roads, the question of fencing off the rabbits would be very different where there are numerous roads, how would it act if the wire netting were made legal?—Well, generally, where there are roads there are boundary-lines laid down for fencing, and where a road can be made a fence can be erected.

428. I refer more to expense?—It is not so costly as you suppose.

429. Added to existing fences, what would it cost per mile?—It is very much cheaper now than formerly.

430. It could not be done, including labour, much under £50 per mile?—Perhaps not. It depends greatly on the locality.

431. You told us what was spent in getting stoats and weasels, can you tell us what you can get them at per head now?—Mine cost me £3 to £4.

432. How many did you turn out?—303, 12, 18, 125—458 in all.

433. Can you give us any information as to their breeding since you turned them out?—There was very little breeding the first two years. My own shepherd told me he had found a nest with eight in.

434. *Mr. Lance.*] Weasels or stoats?—I could not say.

435. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You turned out both?—Yes.

436. Have you any recommendations to make as regards stoats and weasels?—We have not had an opportunity of determining the action of either; but the stoat, so far as I can gather, is more active than the weasel. I have seen large rabbits bitten behind the ear, which I believe had been done by a stoat.

437. Have you heard of any distemper among them?—Nothing at all. They have been trapped and found perfectly healthy. I did find one dead—a young one—but could not account for its death.

438. Would you imagine it might have been killed by eating a dead lark?—I do not think so: there was no poisoning going on at the time. They might have got it from some of my neighbours, but I think this is most improbable.

439. You do not think the stoats and weasels bred the first two years?—Not many. Now we begin to see them occasionally.

440. And you know that they are breeding now?—Yes.

441. *Mr. Duncan.*] You said there was one part of your run where the rabbits were pretty plentiful?—Yes.

442. What is the character of that country?—It is dry land and rubbly country.

443. Is there any way of getting on that part?—Yes.

444. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have you ever known a case where a sheep has been bitten by a stoat or weasel?—I think it is a mistake to suppose so; I have never heard of it, and do not believe it.

445. You consider stoats and weasels are hardier than ferrets?—Yes; and it is very difficult for the rabbit to catch them.

446. You disapprove of traps?—Yes.

447. *Mr. Coleman Phillips* told us that his experience taught him that traps with blood left on them acted as a kind of magnet for the natural enemy. Do you think that is so?—No doubt the sense of smell of both weasel and stoat is very great, and their powers of tracking very remarkable; while the blood is fresh on the traps it would have a great tendency to attract them, but not when the blood was dry and some days old.

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.

TUESDAY, 20TH AUGUST, 1889.

Mr. W. H. BEETHAM examined.

478. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—W. H. Beetham.

479. Will you be good enough to give the Committee any general information you know of in respect to the rabbits in your part of the country?—Yes. I may say that we have a great many rabbits in the Wairarapa. Last year was exceptionally favourable for them; in fact, more so than for several years. They have appeared to grow upon us again. I attribute this fact chiefly to the very mild winter, which had the effect of increasing the rabbits enormously. Our experience is this: that the poisoning we did during last autumn cleared them down considerably. We poisoned early, before the grass grew, and we found that answered extremely well. In Wairarapa North we have decided to form ourselves into a Rabbit Board, and introduce the stoat and weasel. Our object, I may say, in forming this Board is for the purpose of introducing the natural enemy, not that we wished in any way to manage our own affairs, or, in the slightest manner possible, interfere with the Inspectors, because I consider they are worthy men, and have done a great deal of good in the cause. Our object was solely with the view of introducing the natural enemy, and, of course, getting the Government subsidy. I wish to be clearly understood that I am quite satisfied with the Inspectors.

480. Have you formed the Board?—Yes, we have; but it is not yet gazetted; but I expect it will be in a few days.

481. You say the rabbits are increasing?—Yes.

482. You, of course, poisoned during the winter?—Yes. We commenced earlier than most people, and in our case it proved very successful.

483. After poisoning, have you hunted with dogs?—We do not use large packs of dogs; we have abandoned the idea; we shoot a good many, and keep a few spaniels, but we do not approve of large packs of dogs.

484. Do you use traps?—We use traps in some parts, but only then to a limited extent; we do not approve of trapping altogether.

485. If any of the natural enemy were turned out, in your opinion, should trapping be absolutely put a stop to?—If any Rabbit Board passed such a rule as that I consider it would be most unjust. I think it would be unwise for any Board to have the authority to say, "You must not trap," or dictate in any way. I firmly believe, and I am not alone in this, that the introduction of the natural enemy will, in the long run, overtake the pest.

486. Will not the trapping destroy a number of the natural enemy?—Yes; trapping will never exterminate the rabbits, or the natural enemy either.

487. You think the two are not connected—that is, trapping after the natural enemy is turned out?—It is quite possible that many farmers may trap with great success, and find they can keep the rabbits under by trapping alone; but to use them in poor country does very little good. I think it would be unjust to pass an Act or lay down any rule prohibiting persons from using traps if they so wished.

488. Of course you know Mr. Phillips: what do you think of the fluke? Do you think it will be of any use?—I am not prepared to give an opinion on the subject.

489. Has it been tried in your part of the Wairarapa?—We have found diseased rabbits. They had enlarged livers, and have the appearance of being over-fed. The disease, however, has had no beneficial effect in our district.

490. What is your opinion as to wire netting: do you think it is serviceable or injurious?—It has been of very great service to us, situated as we are. We had a neighbour enclosed, as it were, in the middle of our place. We commenced poisoning six weeks' or two months before him. Had it not been for the wire netting his rabbits would have spread, and our poisoning would have been of little use. This fence we erected at considerable expense by ourselves, but we have not begrudged the money, because we feel it has been of very great service.

491. Then, you consider the wire netting a reliable fence against the intrusion of rabbits?—Yes; most certainly I do. We had first-class grass inside the fence, which I am convinced we should not have had if we had not the fence there.

492. What is your opinion as regards making it a legal fence?—I would recommend that it be made a legal fence, but only under certain conditions. I do not think it would be right in every case. It would not be fair, for instance, that any one should have the power of calling on his neighbour and compelling him to erect it on all occasions. So that no injustice should be done, I would suggest that the question of fencing off one's neighbour's property should be left to two arbitrators to say whether it was necessary or not, and that the Resident Magistrate of the district should act as referee between them. Under those circumstances I think little harm could be done in making the fence a legal one. I do not think the power should be left in any one man's hands to say, "You must erect this fence."

493. *Mr. Lance.*] What assistance have you had from the Government in regard to stoats and weasels?—I am not aware that we have had any assistance.

494. None at all?—No.

495. About this Rabbit Board: it is not yet formed, is it?—Yes; it will be gazetted, I hope, in a day or two. The requisite number of signatures have been obtained, so that we hope soon to get the Government subsidy, pound for pound from the rates, which we considered would be better than getting from Government £1 for a stoat and 10s. for a weasel. The object for which this Board is formed is solely to introduce the natural enemy, and not in the slightest degree to interfere with the working of the Inspectors. I consider the Government should subsidise the Boards, and I also think the subsidies should be retrospective. Messrs. Riddiford and Stuckey spent considerable sums in introducing stoats and weasels.

496. Are there no ferret-breeding establishments in your part of the country?—We have done a great deal in the way of breeding ferrets. I dare say we have bred a thousand; but our expe-

rience is that they are difficult animals to rear, and die of distemper. We hope that the stoat and weasel will be hardier, and form a better natural enemy than the ferret. Still, we believe the ferret has done good work in our neighbourhood; but they are too delicate, and as an instance of that I may state that at our breeding-establishment five hundred died off in a few weeks of distemper.

497. The Government are stopping the breeding of ferrets. They were paying 7s. per head for breeding them: do you think stopping it is wise or unwise?—I believe ferrets have, as I said before, done good work, and I think their breeding should be encouraged.

498. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You have mentioned that the rabbits increased considerably last year from certain causes. But, take the case of some of the settlers who, despite the increase, had very few, because of the efforts they used in keeping them down. Now, had the Inspector endeavoured to make the owners of the other properties where the rabbits were plentiful carry out his instructions, do you think the increase would not have been checked?—I think the Inspectors, so far as I am aware, have acted with wise discretion. For myself, I know of no instance where they have neglected their duty. Had they compelled persons to follow any hard-and-fast rules many might have been ruined. Inspectors might have compelled owners to put on large packs of dogs to fight against the increase, but it would have been so much money thrown away. I think, therefore, for many reasons, the Inspectors acted wisely in letting them alone.

499. So that the runholder whom I will suppose cleared down his rabbits has to submit to be inundated from his neighbour's place: that would be the result, would it not?—That is quite true. But the question is: had the Inspector sent a large number of men on the infested property, and told him to put on a hundred dogs to kill the rabbits, and finding that did not do told him to put on a thousand, and so on, the man might be ruined. The question is a very difficult one to solve. I believe the only solution to the difficulty in such a case is the erection of a wire fence. One man holding a piece of rich open country without much scrub might keep the rabbits down easily enough, while his neighbour may have a poor scrubby country which will become a rabbit-warren in spite of him. I think, under such circumstances, the man holding the good land should fence it off; it would pay him to do so; that is my opinion.

500. You know Mr. Riddiford?—Yes.

501. And you are acquainted with his property?—Yes.

502. In his evidence before this Committee two or three days ago he mentioned a case where he determined to poison in the summer time. He did so, and it was very successful, and the rabbits were cleared right off. Now, could not the Inspectors have arranged that poisoning throughout the district should have gone on this way, and so put down a part of the rabbits?—Well, I am not prepared to dispute that. The Inspector may have made an error of judgment. I know they had a notice in the papers to the effect that simultaneous poisoning should take place in June. This, from our experience this year, and also previous years, was a mistake. Our poisoning commenced early in April, and was very successful; far more so than the one in June. The Inspectors, no doubt, when they issued this notice did it for the best, and acted on previous experience. In some instances when you poison in the summer time the rabbits only get sickened and do not come the second time; like rats, you cannot get them to take it. You may be sure the Inspectors acted for the best. It is a most difficult question to lay down any fixed rule upon.

503. Are you aware that some people in the Wairarapa have only commenced to poison a few days ago?—I am aware they were very late in some instances.

504. Do you think the Inspectors should have taken the matter in hand before they did in places where the rabbits were numerous?—I do not like to blame the Inspectors, because I am not prepared to make any hard-and-fast rule. The Inspectors I do not believe know more than we do, who are so vitally interested in the matter. I believe they endeavour to do what is right, and act for the best. I am convinced the whole salvation is in the introduction of the natural enemy. The poisoning business is becoming to be a heavy annual cost, exceeding all our rates put together. I may say the cost of poisoning on our property, which took place two months ago, was £800.

505. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] You said, in your opinion, that the erection of a boundary wire fence was a good protection against your neighbour's rabbits?—Yes.

506. Do you think in such cases as that the owner should pay half the cost of the fence?—I tried to get our neighbours to help us. They knew the law did not compel them, and so we had to pay it ourselves; but this we did not regret, because it paid us.

507. You had to pay the whole cost because, as the law stands at present, it is not a legal fence?—Yes; they knew we should have to pay it.

508. Would you advocate it being made legal—compelling your neighbour to pay his share?—Yes; under certain conditions; but not to make it compulsory at all times.

509. *Hon. Mr. Robinson.*] Are the rabbits more likely to be destroyed by united efforts of the neighbours themselves or under Government supervision?—I should be very sorry to see the Inspectors discharged. What I would like to say is this: that no hard-and-fast rule, in my opinion, can be laid down, because what may suit one person will not suit another. One man may have good rich land who cannot afford to leave it to the rabbits, while his neighbour may have poor and barren land. I say it is a most difficult question to determine.

Mr. F. F. C. HUDDLESTON examined.

510. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—F. F. C. Huddleston.

511. You live at Mount Cook?—Yes.

512. And there is a rabbit-fence erected there?—Yes; there is a main line of fence running across there.

513. Will you give the Committee what information you can in reference to the rabbits before and after you resided in the district?—Yes.

514. You were at one time a Rabbit Inspector, I believe?—Yes; I was an Inspector for some time in Otago; after that I was located at Burke's Pass. I found there a number of rabbits, but of a different class to the southern rabbit, being larger and slower in their movements. There was every indication to show that the southern rabbit was going up on the south side of the river. Before the fence was put up there were a few rabbits on both sides, but since then they have diminished considerably on the north side. The branch fence going from the Tasman River into the hills has checked the rabbits going up from the south. Last year I could see them almost anywhere, but last season I could find but few. From these facts I have come to the conclusion that this fence has brought them to a check from going up the valley, and the new fence has checked them from getting through into the Canterbury side. Between the river and the fence the rabbits have increased, and on the north side, where there were a few, they have almost disappeared.

515. Then, you consider the fence has been the means of effectually stopping the rabbits?—Yes; it has been an effectual stoppage to the rabbits going further up. If the fence is properly attended to, and looked after by the keepers, I am convinced that it will be a sufficient check.

516. How many keepers are there employed?—From Pukaki to Mount Cook end there are two.

517. What is the distance?—It would be about ten miles for each man to look after. There are two lads employed within the cross-fence, and their duty is to stop the rabbits from getting through the fence, and pay visits to the line of fence and destroy any rabbits they come across. In their spare time they destroy rabbits above that line of fence with tame ferrets, shooting, and poisoning; but during this winter they only killed eight, while in the same time last year they killed fifty or sixty, and the summer before that 140; so, it will be seen that the fence has checked the stream of rabbits up the valley.

518. Are the settlers on the north side looking after the rabbits as they should?—Yes; ever since the district has been declared a rabbit district. I may say I have had some experience on my brother-in-law's place, Captain F. Hayter, Burke's Pass. He took active measures, and within two years he obtained three thousand skins. Since then he employed rabbiters, but they could get scarcely any; but they are still increasing on the south side of the fence.

519. Are the settlers on the south side taking means to stay their progress?—Yes. The run-holders have been at work for the last four or five years. They always keep men at work, but they are not sufficient to check, or even diminish, them.

520. Are the natural enemy being turned out now?—Yes; the last two or three years. A number have been turned out in the Tasman Valley, on both sides of the valley; some were also turned out within the forks of the high-spurs, and are, I think, doing excellent work, because I have seen no signs of rabbits lately.

521. Then, your opinion is that, if the fence is properly looked after, it will prove very successful?—Yes; that is my opinion. The fence had a very severe test last winter, for there was about 2ft. of snow on it. Of course, it requires attending to, so that the rabbits will be kept from banking upon it.

522. *Mr. Dodson.*] When you say there were 2ft. of snow on it, do you mean that the fence was covered with snow to a depth of 2ft.?—Yes; in some places it was; but it was soft snow, and the rabbits could not travel over it.

523. How long is this branch fence?—About a mile.

524. *Mr. Duncan.*] Have those station-owners who did not offer again for their leases taken the necessary steps to keep the rabbits down?—Yes; one has employed rabbiters, and has also been poisoning.

525. Which station is that?—Glentanner.

526. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] Last year, you say, you experienced exceptionally heavy snow?—Yes.

527. After the snow had cleared away, did you find many of the natural enemy dead?—No; I did not see any. I have seen their tracks since.

528. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Tracks of ferrets or stoats?—Tracks of both, I saw.

529. *Mr. Buchanan.*] On the snow?—Yes. I may say that several ferrets have been seen by a party of gentlemen who were over the country in June, hunting. This was at Pukaki. I am sure the ferrets in that part are doing their work well.

FRIDAY, 23RD AUGUST, 1889.

RICHARD HULL examined.

530. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—Richard Hull.

531. You are aware you have come here to answer a petition from Mr. Ross?—Yes; and I should like to refer to each clause seriatim. I may say that the petition was sent in in August. Does the clause in reference to rabbits being numerous refer to that date, because they are not numerous there now?

The petition was here read as follows:—

“(1.) That one Richard Hull is Inspector under ‘The Rabbit Nuisance Act, 1882,’ and its amendments, having his head-quarters at Palmerston, in the Provincial District of Otago.

“(2.) That rabbits are numerous throughout various parts of the Dunback district.

“(3.) That one of your petitioners, George Ross, occupies, as a sheep-farmer, over two thousand acres in the Dunback district, adjoining the sheep-runs belonging to Sir F. D. Bell and Alfred Bell.

“(4.) That in the month of February last rabbits were numerous on the aforesaid farm of the said George Ross, and also on Bell's sheep-run, and rabbits were constantly passing from Bell's land to Ross's land and *vice versa*.

"(5.) That on the 26th day of February last the said Inspector served on the said George Ross a notice under section 8 of 'The Rabbit Nuisance Act, 1882; but he did not serve any such notice on any of the owners or occupiers of land adjoining the said George Ross.

"(6.) That the said George Ross attempted to comply with such notice by putting on his sons to destroy the rabbits on his said farm by trapping, shooting, and killing with dogs, and continued to so destroy the rabbits during the month of March; but, on account of the occupiers of the adjoining lands not taking any steps to destroy the rabbits on their lands, he was unable to effect the complete destruction of the rabbits without the aid of poison.

"(7.) That on the 2nd April last the Inspector visited the said land of the said George Ross and saw the said George Ross there; and on that occasion the said George Ross informed the Inspector that he had been attempting to destroy the rabbits in the manner aforesaid, but that he could not do so effectually, for the reason aforesaid, and that he would commence to poison the rabbits as soon as his threshing was over; but the Inspector very strongly urged him not to commence poisoning until the month of June, when it could be conducted uniformly over the district.

"(8.) That the Inspector did not communicate with the said George Ross in any manner whatsoever until the 23rd April last, when he wrote him stating that he had put his said land under the operation of section 11 of 'The Rabbit Nuisance Act, 1882.'

"(9.) That on the 24th April last the Inspector put one John Bell on the said land belonging to the said George Ross to destroy the rabbits on the said land, in pursuance of the power conferred upon him by the said section 11.

"(10.) That the said John Bell remained on the said land by direction of the Inspector for fourteen days, killing rabbits by means of traps and dogs.

"(11.) That the Inspector served on the said George Ross a notice under section 12 of the said Act, requiring him to pay the sum of £2, being the costs, charges, and expenses occasioned by the destruction of the rabbits, in accordance with section 11 of the said Act.

"(12.) The said George Ross refused to pay the same for the following reasons: At the interview on the 2nd April the Inspector had given him to understand that he had sufficiently complied with the notice of the 26th February last. The Inspector had not, nor had any one on his behalf, destroyed the rabbits on the said land within the meaning of section 11 of the said Act. It was altogether impossible, without the aid of poison, to destroy the rabbits on the said land while they abounded on the adjoining lands, and even with poison it would have been a difficult work to destroy them under such circumstances.

"(13.) The Inspector sued the said George Ross in the Resident Magistrate's Court, at Palmerston, for the said sum of £2, and the case was heard on the 10th day of July instant before H. A. Stratford, Esq., Resident Magistrate.

"(14.) On the hearing of the said case it was proved by the admission of the Inspector and otherwise that rabbits were numerous on the adjoining lands, but that no notices under the said section 8 had been served on any of the owners or occupiers of land in the locality except on the said George Ross, and on one Thomas Lindsay, hereinafter mentioned.

"(15.) It was also proved by the admission of the Inspector and otherwise that neither the Inspector nor any one on his behalf had visited the land after the entry thereon of the said John Bell as aforesaid, with the object of seeing whether the rabbits had been destroyed by the said John Bell; and the said John Bell, on the hearing of the case, stated that, although he had killed a good number during the two weeks he was employed, the rabbits had not been destroyed, but were still, at the expiration of the two weeks, as numerous on the land as when the said John Bell first went on the land.

"(16.) The Magistrate gave judgment for plaintiff on the grounds that the question as to whether the said George Ross had complied with the notice of the 26th February, and whether the Inspector had used all such means and taken all such measures and done and performed all such acts or things as were proper or necessary to be done to insure the destruction of the rabbits, which were entirely in the discretion of the Inspector, and that the Magistrate could not reconsider any such decision of the Inspector so long as he had served the necessary notice; but, in giving judgment, the Magistrate severely censured the Inspector for not making himself acquainted with the state of the land referred to, and said that his conduct in that respect, of not requiring the adjoining holders of land to destroy the rabbits on their lands, were matters for departmental inquiry, but not for him as a Magistrate to deal with. And, as the amount sued for was only £2, there was no appeal against the Magistrate's judgment.

"(17.) That Thomas Lindsay, another of your petitioners, and an owner of land in Dunback district, was served with similar notices, and treated in identically the same manner as the said George Ross.

"(18.) That, for the reasons aforesaid and others that your petitioners could adduce, the said Inspector has shown great partiality or great carelessness in the performance of his duties as Rabbit Inspector.

"Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your Excellency may be pleased to remove the said Richard Hull to another district, or cause a Royal Commission to be issued to inquire into the conduct of the said Richard Hull. And your petitioners will ever pray.

"GEORGE ROSS,
"THOMAS LINDSAY, } Farmers, Dunback.'

532. *Mr. McKenzie.*] It refers to the time when you took action against Mr. Ross?—

533. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Well, refer to clause 4, That in the month of February last rabbits were numerous on the farm of George Ross?—I should like to refer to each clause seriatim, and, in the first place, to say that I consulted the Chief Inspector in everything I did, and it was with his concurrence that I acted on all occasions. As I am instructed by him, I think he should have been here to give evidence.

534. *Mr. Buchanan.*] It would be as well if you stated what your position is.

535. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your position?—Sub-Inspector.

536. Who is the chief?—*Mr. Douglass.* I am Sub-Inspector, and have three counties to attend to—namely, Waihemo, Waikouaiti, and Maniototo—Palmerston South being my head-quarters. In all matters of this kind I consult my chief officer, and, of course, I should like him to have been here.

537. *Mr. McKenzie.*] Where is the chief officer?—At Dunedin.

538. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Might I put this question: Did Mr. Douglass visit the locality himself or did he simply concur in your recommendations from your own personal knowledge of the country?—Action was taken upon my reports. Mr. Douglass has been on the property since this case was heard. He was never, to my knowledge, on the land before.

539. Therefore, the instructions you received from your chief were in consequence of statements made to him by yourself?—Yes.

540. *Mr. Lance.*] Where does this land join Bell's?—It is only a little piece of 50 chains [plans produced]. It is the only place where it joins Bell's run.

541. *Mr. McKenzie.*] I think you are wrong: are you prepared to say this part [shown on plan] is not part of Bell's run?—I do not think so. To me the occupier is the owner, and Bell is not occupying it. The occupier is the person I have to deal with.

542. How many acres has Mr. Bell?—I could not really say. He might have 80,000 acres altogether—leasehold and freehold.

543. *Mr. Dodson.*] But you do not trouble yourself as to who is the owner?—No; I only look after the occupier. Mr. Bell may be the owner, but the occupier is the owner within the meaning of the Rabbit Act. I produced the plans to show that Ross's boundary, in all, with Bell's, was only 50 chains. Now, in regard to clause 5, that the Sub-Inspector served George Ross with a notice under section 8 of "The Rabbit Nuisance Act, 1882," but did not serve any notice on adjoining occupiers, I would ask how Ross knew that. Mr. Bell had men on Duncan's boundary, and Mr. Duncan was working at keeping rabbits down also. I hand this letter from John Duncan, dated Dunback, 5th February, 1889: "To the Rabbit Inspector, Palmerston.—Sir,—The rabbits from my neighbours are destroying my crop wholesale, and they are not making any effort to destroy the rabbits. Unless you make them do it, I have no remedy. One of them told me he would not take any steps to destroy the rabbits, and there is about 12 chains all along his boundary of my crops useless through the rabbits from his ground eating it. Come and see yourself.—I am, &c." I say, therefore, that it was in consequence of this letter that I went on to the ground. I saw Duncan, and said to him, "You have three neighbours joined to your property—namely, Ross, Lindsay, and Bell." I said, "What is Bell doing," and Duncan replied, "He is the best neighbour I have got; and he put two men on immediately I asked him. The other two would do nothing."

544. *Mr. Dodson.*] Well, you did something after that?—Yes. I received the letter on the 15th February, being in the vicinity of Naseby at the time it was written. On the 21st I met Duncan as I was coming down from the country, and he then complained to me. On the 25th I visited the land, and Duncan told me that he was perfectly satisfied with what Bell had done, as he had placed two men on directly he had asked him, and that he was the best neighbour he had got, and added, Ross and Lindsay would do nothing. On the 26th February I sent the ordinary legal notices to Ross and Lindsay. I tried to see Ross, but was unable to do so, and therefore wrote to him. I saw Lindsay himself.

545. Have you any evidence?—Yes.

546. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You might say something about this 6th clause, in reference to Ross putting on his sons to keep the rabbits down?—My answer to that is that his sons were only "off and on," and this fact was admitted by his sons in Court.

547. *Mr. Dodson.*] In fact, you were not satisfied?—No. Putting on sons only means that they go out shooting rabbits after their day's work. At the end of March, I think it was, I wrote to Ross on the subject, being unable to see him. I subsequently saw his son, and, in answer to me, he said no one was working at the rabbits near Duncan's. I replied that I should go on the land again on Tuesday next, and if there was no one working I should put a man on myself, under section 11 of the Act. I saw Ross when I went there on the 2nd April, and he said he had put a man on that morning. I told him I was glad of it, because I did not wish to see rows between the neighbours. At this time the whole country was pretty bad, but I considered it would be unwise for me to put everybody on killing then, as I wished to get a simultaneous poisoning in June, and the feed being so plentiful then, it would be useless to start sooner. Of course, it was my duty to take notice when complaints were made. I simply asked Ross to keep a man on till such time as this man's crops were saved. It would not have cost much. On the 19th April I saw Duncan, and he told me that neither Ross nor Lindsay had men on. Well, I was surprised at this statement after what Ross had told me. On the 22nd April I sent my agent, Mr. Field, up to see if this was true, because I could not believe it after what Ross had told me. I told Field to report to me if any work had been done. He came back and said that there was no sign of anything having been done, and that there was nobody there at work, and I engaged two men to go on on the 24th at £1 per week. Notice was sent to Ross and Lindsay on the 23rd that I had placed their properties under section 11 of the Act.

548. When did the men go?—On the 24th. One went on section 9, the other on section 5.

549. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Did both men go on Ross's?—No; one on Ross's and one on Lindsay's. On the 6th May I instructed Field to go on to the ground and see the men and inspect work, and also to see Ross; and, if he was agreed to go on with the work himself, the men should be taken off. Ross did agree, and the men were taken off on the 8th. I sent on the 13th May for the payment of the money expended. No money was forthcoming. On the 18th I gave them another week, and still they did not pay. They were then summoned, and judgment was given for the plaintiff—£2 in each case. There are one or two things in the petition I should like to refer to.

In clause 7, in reference to an interview I had with Ross on the 2nd April, I did not give him to understand any such thing as stated in that clause. I told him I was glad he had put men on, because it would save all unpleasantness, and expressed a wish that he would keep him on till the poisoning took place in June. As to clause 12, that the Inspector had not destroyed the rabbits within the meaning of section 11 of the Act, my answer to that is, the Resident Magistrate's ruling on that point is sufficient to show that the provisions of the Act were complied with, as a decision was given for plaintiff. As to clause 14, as to the admissions of the Inspector, I say, as a matter of fact, there were no admissions made in the Court, as the Resident Magistrate ruled that all such was irrelevant evidence. The question was asked me by Mr. Stout, who appeared for the defendant, Were rabbits not numerous on other properties? and the Resident Magistrate said I need not answer the question; and it was not answered; so there were no admissions made in Court. There was no necessity to serve the other men, because they were working. I was in the Court the whole time, and I never heard any such statement made by John Bell as referred to in the latter part of clause 15. As to the latter part of clause 16, I consider it most ingenious and carefully worded, so as to bear a construction never intended. Immediately I saw it I wrote the following letter to the Resident Magistrate: "Palmerston South, 20th August, 1889.—H. A. Stratford, Esq., R.M.—Dear sir,—As a result of the recent case, Hull *versus* Ross, heard before you on the 18th July last, is a petition to Parliament praying for my removal for 'carelessness and partiality' in administering the Rabbit Nuisance Act in this district. A portion of one of the clauses reads thus: 'But in giving his decision the Magistrate severely censured the Inspector for not making himself acquainted with the state of the land referred to, and said that his conduct in that respect, and also in respect of not requiring the adjoining holders of land to destroy the rabbits on their lands, were matters for a departmental inquiry, but not for him, as a Magistrate, to deal with.' Will you kindly inform me if you used these words, and, if so, if they will bear the construction put upon them.—I am, &c., RICHARD HULL." [The following memorandum from Mr. Stratford, dated 21st August, 1889, was read in reply to above letter: "I certainly did not severely censure you, as far as I remember. I refused to hear general complaints against you for partiality, as I said, I think, these were matters for departmental inquiry. My judgment for plaintiff is sufficient proof that I found on the fact you had complied with the requirements of the Act, and defendant had not. I think I said I was of opinion that, on receipt of Agent Field's latest report, you should have visited the land in question again before taking extreme measures; also that Inspectors should pay due regard to section 4, 'Rabbit Nuisance Act Amendment Act, 1886,' but omission to do so did not excuse defendant, who had not complied with your orders.—H. A. STRATFORD."] I may state, in reference to the belief that I have been showing partiality to Bell, the following official letters will speak for themselves:—

The following is copy of a letter received by me from Mr. Bell, dated Waihemo, 27th July, 1889: "On receipt of your letter of 23rd, Mr. Ormsby went out, and spent several hours on foot, with shepherd and three dogs, looking for rabbits about the Stoneburn hut. We are utterly unable to understand your complaint, as we cannot find rabbits there at all, except the usual odd one here and there. In deference to your wishes, however, the locality will be fully re-poisoned before Tuesday, though poison is still thick all up the Stoneburn River. You will oblige me if you can make it convenient to reinspect the ground in a fortnight's time. You must, I think, be well aware of the loss and inconvenience caused to us by your neglect to enforce poisoning opposite the hut, this side of the river, in the earlier part of the season. The use in an official letter of the word 'disgraceful' is extremely offensive, and I must request that the language of your letters be in future kept free from such intolerable terms." The other letter from Mr. Bell is dated 26th July, 1889: "With reference to the paddocks on the Dunback Road and the land near the Port Chalmers Endowment, referred to in your letter of 23rd instant, our gang of poisoners is still at work there. You will please, however, note that the rabbits have not taken poison all the winter on this block nearly so well as elsewhere, and it may therefore be necessary to try other means shortly, as soon as the poisoning has been thoroughly finished. You will, of course, agree with us that the use of other means cannot be allowed now, as it would interfere with the action of the poisoning work; it must wait till the gang is discharged. Patches, no doubt, still exist here as everywhere else; but you cannot but admit that the poisoning has been faithfully, systematically, and thoroughly done throughout the whole block."

SATURDAY, 24TH AUGUST, 1889 (in absence of Hon. Mr. Acland, Hon. Mr. PHARAZYN elected Chairman).

Mr HULL's examination continued.

550. Mr. McKenzie.] Will you kindly produce the map you did yesterday?—Yes. [Map produced.]

551. Now, with regard to this boundary we had a dispute about—this section, No. 34: there has been a new survey. Do you believe that Mr. Bell is still in occupation of it?—To the best of my knowledge he is not.

552. With regard to section 34: you will not swear that Bell had not poisoned it?—No.

553. Are you aware that Bell's property joins Ross's at another place?—Yes; at a sharp bend of Shag River, with river between.

554. You said yesterday that Ross only had three neighbours—Bell, Lindsay, and Duncan; I say he has also Murray, Wilcox, Glover, and Kitchen besides. Now, would you wish to correct yourself from what you said yesterday?—The map shows for itself. The map is properly drawn up, and I put the names on it.

555. Did you examine this land of Ross's?—Yes.

556. Did you find rabbits on it?—Yes.

557. You said that you got this petition sent to you ; it was not sent through the department ?—No ; Mr. Otterson sent me a copy.
558. *Hon. The Chairman.*] It was a written copy you received ?—Yes.
559. *Mr. McKenzie.*] You admitted yesterday that the complaints against you charged you with partiality and gross carelessness ; that is, I presume, what you wish to refute ?—Yes.
560. When did you take charge of this district ?—In October.
561. Who put you in charge of the district ?—The Minister of Lands. I was sent there from Blenheim.
562. Did you go to Dunedin to the head office and report yourself to Mr. Douglass ?—I reported myself to Mr. Douglass at Wellington, on my way South.
563. When you got to Palmerston, what steps did you take to find out about the rabbits ?—I rode all over the district.
564. Did you see many rabbits on your first trip ?—Not a great many.
565. Did you take steps there and then to put them down ?—Yes ; I wrote a number of letters. I was cautious as to how I should proceed, because I did not know the owners of the land, and it took me some time to become acquainted with the district.
566. Did you find an agent in charge when you took office ?—No.
567. Was an application made to you by an agent in charge previous to your arrival ?—About a week after I got there I got applications from two persons—one named Doris and another named Field.
568. Was Field an agent before you arrived ?—No.
569. Was Field a stranger as well as you were ?—He was not a stranger ; he knew the place.
570. Was Field previously employed by the department ?—No ; not to my knowledge.
571. You know that Doris was ?—Yes ; I knew that he was formerly an agent.
572. And you did not think it was necessary to keep the services of Doris, who could give you some information ?—No.
573. I will ask you to state why you decided not to employ Doris ?—I was advised not to.
574. And who advised you ?—Inspector Clifton, the previous Inspector in charge of Otago.
575. What reason did he give you that you should not employ him ?—He said, in his opinion, he was not a man fit for the office, and strongly recommended me not to employ him.
576. And you then employed Field ?—Yes.
577. He was a stranger to the work ?—Yes ; but he was strongly recommended to me.
578. Did you get a circular from the department to the effect that you could take your agent ?—No ; I do not remember getting one.
579. Did you see by a recent resolution of this Committee last year that agents were to be in the hands of the Inspectors ?—I think so.
580. But you did not get a circular from the department ?—I might have got one, but I do not remember it.
581. You felt that you were at liberty to employ any one you liked ?—Yes.
582. When did you take the first action with regard to the rabbits ?—With regard to the Court work ?
583. I mean in giving notices to any of the settlers ?—These notices referred to were fresh notices I sent out. I went first on the ground to see for myself.
584. Will you name the persons you gave notices to in December ?—H. Withy, J. McBain, J. Dean, McBain, Wright, Findlay, and others. These were all Goodwood Bush settlers.
585. What is the distance of these persons' land from Ross's ?—Ten or eleven miles, I should think.
586. Were there any complaints made with regard to these settlers from any one in the district, or was it from anything Quarterly told you ?—I had a complaint made to me from Mr. Ritchie, of Mount Royal. He complained of Anderson, and he got a notice later on.
587. Would you have taken action without Quarterly if you had had no complaint ?—If I had happened to have gone to this country and seen so many rabbits I should have done so at once.
588. Did he leave any note with you in regard to Dunback ?—I do not remember if he did.
589. When did you take the first action in Dunback ?—The first action I took was on 25th February.
590. Who did you serve with notices besides Ross at that time ?—Lindsay was the only other man.
591. And if Duncan had not complained you would not have done so ?—No.
592. And you were not aware of the state of the country before you got the complaint ?—I knew it was getting bad.
593. Does that apply only to Ross and Lindsay ?—They were all about the same.
594. Have you any knowledge of the fact that Duncan and Ross were not on friendly terms ?—I had no idea at that time : I have only heard it since.
595. Now, Mr. Hull, you say you had not at this time served notices on Mr. Bell ?—No.
- 595A. Did you go and see his country ?—Yes : I did not go where Bell's two men were working on Duncan's boundary, because there was no necessity, Duncan being satisfied.
596. What state was Bell's country in ?—Some portion was not so bad as others. I inspected Ross's land on the 25th, and served notices on the following day on Ross and Lindsay. About two months afterwards I wrote a strong letter to Ross, drawing his attention to the matter. I could not find him, but I saw Lindsay. I saw Mr. Duncan, and told him to let me know if he was not satisfied. When riding through subsequently I called at Ross's, but only saw Mrs. Ross. On another occasion I saw his son, and he knew the position of affairs as well as his father—like most farmers' sons do. I told him I had several complaints from Duncan, and he said there was no one

that he was aware of working at Duncan's boundary. I gave him my ultimatum that if he did not at once put men on I should do it myself, and men would be put on by Tuesday if there was no one then on

597. Then, you say you saw Ross on the 2nd April?—Yes.

598. What did he say then?—That he had put men on.

599. Did you go and see for yourself that men were put on?—No; I believed what Ross told me. It was too small a matter to go and see about after being told that the men had been put on.

600. Did Ross tell you a week after this that he would poison the ground after he had his threshing finished?—Yes; and I advised him most strongly to delay.

601. The next thing you did was to put men in charge?—The next thing was on the 19th April, when I saw Duncan in town again; and he surprised me by saying that neither Ross nor Lindsay had put men on the ground. I have no feeling against Ross. He was a perfect stranger to me, and I had no reason for doubting his word, and I was consequently much surprised when I heard he had no men on working after telling me himself that he had put them on. On the 22nd April—I think it was a general holiday—I sent Agent Field straight away to visit the place to examine Duncan's crops, and to report to me fully. He said there were no signs of traps, no one on the ground, and the rabbits were numerous, and nothing at all had been done. So that very day I engaged two men, and sent them away on the 24th.

602. But you did not go yourself?—No.

603. You believed what Duncan told you to be the truth?—Pardon me; if I had believed it I should not have sent Agent Field up to report.

604. Was the agent acquainted with the boundary?—Yes; thoroughly.

605. Your agent stated in Court that the area of land was fifty acres: is that so?—He said he was unable to state the area of Ross's.

606. If it was so reported in the *Palmerston Times* would you contradict it?—I should be very sorry to believe all that appeared in the paper.

607. Is it not possible that when your agent went there that Ross might have had men there without him seeing them?—It is simply impossible on the boundary in question.

608. Do you mean to say your agent went over 2,000 acres?—I never arranged to put men over these 2,000 acres, but simply on the part by this crop.

609. Did you have any other instructions to treat any other property in the Dunback District in the same way as Ross's?—There is no other place I have put men on.

610. The only places are Ross's and Lindsay's?—They were the only two men against whom any complaints were made that would do nothing when requested by me.

611. Now, in regard to the complaints made against you by these two gentlemen: they think your action was done through partiality. What I want to get at is this: When you took these steps under section 11 of the Act, you did so because Duncan complained of his crops being eaten—that was your reason?—Yes; precisely so. There was no partiality of any kind. Throughout the petition it hints to that.

612. Mr. Bell has a great deal of property?—Yes.

613. And you are prepared to admit he has a lot of rabbits?—Yes.

614. And it is a hard job to keep them down?—Yes.

615. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You deny the charge of partiality?—Yes; absolutely deny it.

616. *Mr. Kerr.*] The reason you did not give others notice was because you were waiting for the June poisoning?—Exactly.

617. *Mr. Duncan.*] From what I can gather from your evidence these men would not have been charged if it had not been for this crop being eaten?—Just so.

618. What is the extent of the damage done?—I tried to estimate it roughly. There were about 2½ acres of oats that were not worth cutting with a machine.

619. *Mr. Anderson.*] Why did you not take proceedings at an earlier date against Ross?—It was because I wished him to do the work without taking proceedings.

620. You consider, I suppose, that you were lenient with him?—I think I waited too long before taking action. I acknowledge the rabbits were numerous, but I had no desire to press him.

621. *Mr. McKenzie.*] The district was in a very bad state when you arrived there?—Rabbits were fairly numerous in patches, but greatly increased by the time I had sufficient knowledge of the district to take action.

622. You would not like to see it so bad next October?—No; nor will it be so bad, I think.

623. *Mr. Anderson.*] Is it a very difficult district to manage?—It is a very thickly-populated district; but if the people will only act simultaneously it would be easy enough.

624. How many Inspectors have been there during the last seven or eight years?—There have been five Inspectors since the passing of the Act of 1882.

625. *Mr. Kerr.*] Now about this poisoning business: do you think the wheat is properly poisoned?—There is a very great difference; some men use very poor grain, not properly poisoned. There was one instance reported to me where a man steeped his grain in horse urine simply to discolour it, so that the Inspector seeing it would imagine it had gone through the proper process.

626. Is it possible for a Rabbit Inspector to see that the poison is properly mixed?—This is a very large district to go over. When I am inspecting the country, I always taste any grain that looks at all suspicious.

627. But there is nothing in the law compelling a man to make it the proper strength?—If I have any doubt I am very careful and examine it well.

628. It appears to me that they, in many instances, have not the appliances to do the work properly. If they just soak the wheat it makes matters worse and does no good?—I have the greatest difficulty to see it properly carried out. Mr. Bell is willing to sell properly-prepared grain at cost price all over the district, and a good many buy from him.

629. But you cannot make them all purchase?—No; when I see the poison is badly mixed I endeavour to have it properly done; bad grain does considerable harm: I mean when the grain is only half poisoned it only sickens the rabbits, and they will not take it again.

630. It must be bad for the next neighbour?—Yes; it is very hard on him.

631. *Mr. Duncan.*] Where do the settlers get their phosphorus from?—I really cannot say where they get it.

632. Do the Government keep it?—Yes; there is a large quantity kept at Dunedin office, and I can get it up for those who require it.

633. *Mr. Anderson.*] In clause 8 of the petition it says you did not communicate with Ross between the 2nd and the 23rd April?—I saw Ross on 2nd April, but I do not think I saw him between the 2nd and 22nd April. There is another man named Lindsay mentioned in the petition; I saw him, but, as I said before, I did not wish to do anything until the poisoning commenced.

634. *Mr. Duncan.*] When were these two men put on Ross's ground?—On the 24th April.

635. *Mr. Anderson.*] Did you see either Ross or Lindsay after this petition was sent away?—Yes; I saw Lindsay.

636. Did he say why it was sent?—He said Ross was pig-headed and determined, and that he (Lindsay) regretted having been mixed up in it. He told me there was another petition going round the district, but he would have nothing to do with it.

637. *Mr. Duncan.*] What state was this man's crops in on 24th April?—The oats had been partially destroyed before being reaped.

638. To what extent: were they still standing on the land?—The turnips were being damaged on this date.

639. *Mr. McKenzie.*] Have you given notices to all the settlers in the district now?—I have sent out about two hundred. I have included all where there is likely to be any trouble.

640. Will you leave your maps and papers, so that we can look over them?—Yes, certainly until my return from Blenheim.

MONDAY, 26th AUGUST, 1889. [In absence of the Hon. Mr. Acland the Hon. Mr. PHARAZYN in chair.]

ALFRED DOUGLASS examined.

641. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—Alfred Douglass.

642. And you are a Chief Inspector?—Yes.

643. You are aware, Mr. Douglass, I suppose, that your attendance before this Committee has been requested in connection with a petition signed by two farmers named Lindsay and Ross?—Yes.

644. Are you acquainted with the contents of the petition?—I have heard of it, but have not seen it. [Petition was here read.] Of course, I can only speak in a general way about the matter.

645. Probably the better way would be for you to state what you know about it, and then questions can be asked you afterwards. Will you please tell the Committee what you know?—All I can say is that Mr. Hull, the Sub-Inspector, has come down to Dunedin on several occasions to see me on matters connected with this district of Dunback, which was certainly in a backward state as regards rabbits in the autumn. I advised him not to do much at present, but to get along as quietly as possible until the poisoning season commenced. In this particular district one of the settlers, named Duncan, made several complaints about his crops being eaten by rabbits coming from Ross's boundary. Of course, under those conditions, Inspector Hull was bound to take notice of it. Inspector Hull told me he had called at Ross's, and asked him to put a man on to protect Duncan's crop of turnips. Bell put on two men the day after he was asked, but that Ross had not. I thoroughly upheld the action of my officers throughout. Of course, all the statements in this petition are not quite correct. For instance, I was in Court the whole of the time, and, so far as my memory goes, all the Resident Magistrate asked Mr. Hull was if he had visited the place after or just previously to the men being discharged, and the Inspector said that he had not, as Ross had promised to continue the work himself. The Magistrate then made some remarks to the effect that it would have been wiser for him to have seen for himself instead of trusting to his agent. As a matter of fact, at this time Mr. Hull had to go to Naseby, at which place he had to attend to seventeen cases, so that it was impossible for him to have looked after this particular work at that time. It was impossible to kill all the rabbits, and my desire was that things should be left as quietly as possible until poisoning season.

646. Did the petitioners complain to you with regard to the Sub-Inspector's conduct?—I will first read a letter from Mr. Ross on the subject, addressed to Mr. John McKenzie, dated the 19th July, 1889, presented to the Minister of Lands, and forwarded to me for remarks: "I regret having to bring under your notice a recent rabbit case in which I consider I have been very hard dealt with. It is as follows: On the 2nd April the Inspector advised me to put a man on on the boundary between Mr. John Duncan and myself. I said I had already done so, and in the course of three or four days I intended to begin poisoning. He objected to this, and said he did not want any one to begin poisoning till the 1st June. In the meantime I kept the man on the boundary; that would be quite sufficient then. We agreed to this. Without any further notice he (the Inspector) put a man on on the 24th April for two weeks. I refused to pay for this man, as I considered I was badly used, and would test the case, with the result that I was summoned on the 10th July, and lost the case, the Magistrate remarking that the Act gave the Inspector such absolute power that he had no alternative but give judgment against me. The case was of such a glaring nature that the Magistrate felt it his duty to severely overhaul the Inspector. The Farmers' Club also took such notice of the case as to appoint a deputation to wait on the County Council with a view of

urging on them to take the management of the rabbits into their own hands, and save people who were in their own interests doing all that could be done to cope with the evil from being persecuted. You know that I am in the heart of a rabbit district, and to pounce on me without serving all others alike, I say, is not fair. I was put to the expense of fully £25, which I consider the Government ought in all fairness to refund. A meeting of settlers was held at Dunback, which decided that they should begin poisoning on the 13th May. The Inspector objected to this, and afterwards put an advertisement in the local paper that the 1st June was the time to begin, thus ignoring the settlers. Should you want a cheap farm for one of your sons you can apply to me. This rabbit question is a very vexed one. My neighbours, so far as I am aware, were not even asked to make any effort. I have had for the past two years a professional rabbit on the ground almost constantly, and very often two or three of my sons. You can use this letter according to your own judgment. Accept kind regards," &c. I may state that the settlers at this meeting knew well enough that the 1st June had been the time fixed for a general poisoning. The settlers decided to start on the 13th May, when the grass was green, and the consequence would be that no good results would follow. I believe this was done in a spirit of opposition. My reply to the above letter was as follows, dated the 5th August, 1889: "Sub-Inspector Hull consulted with me on different occasions as to what steps he should take. I was in Court during the whole of the hearing, and thoroughly agree with his action. Mr. Duncan made several complaints as to the injury he was suffering from Ross's rabbits destroying his turnips, and the latter did not put on a proper rabbit as he promised to. The two sons alluded to were employed at their ordinary farm-work, and only rabbiting in their spare time. It was after Inspector Hull had fixed the 1st June as the best date to commence simultaneous poisoning that the meeting of farmers, in a spirit of opposition, decided to start on the 13th May, whilst feed was abundant. The Magistrate certainly made some uncalled-for remarks on the Rabbit Act and its working, but was more severe on defendant's counsel than to Inspector Hull. A portion of the Waihemo County is about the worst-infected land I have seen in Otago, and I believe this to be greatly owing to the landowners trusting to political influence, instead of endeavouring to carry out the Inspector's instructions, and work together to put the pest down. It is a common boast that they have had five Inspectors at Palmerston in seven years, and will have the present one removed before long, Mr. George Ross being one of the ringleaders." There have often been complaints from settlers in other districts about the Inspector, but afterwards they have thanked him for bringing pressure to bear.

I think, gentlemen, that should be sufficient, as regards a preliminary statement, and it would now be as well, perhaps, to ask questions.

647. *Mr. Dodson.*] I think Mr. Douglass's letter is quite clear. He seems to have been quite satisfied with Mr. Hull's actions. All Mr. Hull's actions have been approved of by you?—Yes.

648. And he consulted you as to what was best to do?—Yes; about every fortnight we had a personal conversation about this and other matters. His district extends down as far as Dunedin.

649. You are satisfied as to the measures he adopted?—Quite; when once a notice is given it is necessary to insist on some extra work being done.

650. And you do not serve a notice without having sufficient reasons for so doing?—No.

651. And then you insist on it being carried out?—Yes.

652. I suppose it is pretty generally known throughout the district that you are the Chief Inspector, and responsible for what is being done by the Sub-Inspectors?—Yes; I think so.

653. You would say that Ross knew that?—He ought to know; at any rate, I should take it for granted that he did.

654. Did Ross ever see you before the petition came up?—No; Mr. McKenzie and I had a private talk about it; that was after Inspector Hull put the man on. Ross made a complaint to me just a few days ago; we had a talk over it, but I did not see him previously.

655. *Mr. McKenzie.*] What do you mean in your letter in regard to political influences being brought to bear?—I mean that directly the settlers are at variance with the Inspectors they at once petition. There have been two or three petitions got up in the district before. The settlers do not try and kill off the rabbit themselves—that is, some of them—and then they commence getting up an agitation for the removal of the Inspector.

656. From whom does it originate?—That I could not say.

657. You are not personally acquainted with the heart of this district?—No; I only know from hearsay.

658. Is it not a fact that these Inspectors have been removed through the influence of Mr. Bell, and not because of the settlers?—I never heard so.

659. In regard to this political influence: do you know of any of your own knowledge?—No; simply what I have heard. When I wrote that letter the petition was not presented.

660. But it might have been talked of?—Yes. Ross, Lindsay, and Anderson all said they would soon have Hull removed from the district.

661. Will you say whether the remarks made in your letter are from facts obtained from your personal visits or from what you heard previously?—From what I had heard previously. I had no personal knowledge at that time.

662. It was only hearsay, from persons in the district?—Yes; and from what I heard from Inspectors who had been removed.

663. Did you ever hear that Mr. Bell was the greatest sinner in the rabbit district?—Yes. No doubt all last autumn his country was in a bad state; but I could see no distinction between one farm and another.

664. At the time you took charge, did you go over the district to see for yourself?—I only paid a flying visit through.

665. Was the district properly attended to before you took charge?—I am not prepared to say what was the condition of the country. I was in company with Mr. Clifton, and we drove along the roads. It was in December, and we did not see many rabbits.

666. You did not make an examination?—No. Last May I went more carefully through the district, and then the rabbits were bad.

667. When did Inspector Hull come to the district?—In October.

668. He came in October, and the first action he took was against Ross and Lindsay; but there was no action tried to put the rabbits down in a general manner?—Inspector Hull was bringing all pressure to bear without taking actual proceedings. He sent out a lot of notices, and extra means were employed.

669. The whole gist of the thing is this: Section 11 of the Rabbit Act has been put into operation or force against these two men, but against no one else in the district, though the rabbits were bad all over. Hull said he was obliged to take the action he did because he had received complaints from Duncan; and Ross and Lindsay complain they have been harshly treated in the matter. Hull acknowledges that if it had not been for the complaints he would have waited till the poisoning season commenced, and that met with your approval?—I told him to let the things go on as quietly as possible.

670. Were you aware that there was a very strong personal feeling between Duncan and Ross?—No; I never heard that there had been the slightest ill-feeling between them. I did not know but what they were the best of friends.

671. Do you not think, in taking action, that every one should be treated alike?—I should certainly say so, after the simultaneous poison had taken place. Every one should be made to follow it up, and go on killing.

672. Then, suppose the Minister during the year removed the Inspector and put another man on, what would be the result?—It would be in the same position as it was before Inspector Hull came there.

673. There would be twelve months' loss?—Yes.

674. Is the district bad now?—Only in small patches.

675. Was there any complaint against Quartley? Was his removal occasioned through the settlers or was it done solely by the department itself?—I have no papers in reference to Quartley's removal, but I believe he asked to be removed, as he thought it was getting too hot for him.

676. Do you not think it was strange for Hull, coming a stranger to the district, dismissing an old agent and taking on a new man?—Doris was dismissed or retrenched before he (Hull) came there.

677. *Mr. Lance.*] By whom?—Quartley, before Hull took charge. Doris's name was mentioned, and he asked me to reinstate him, but I told him I had left the matter with Mr. Hull to select his own agent.

678. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Did it come out formerly in Court that Ross had not put on this man?—Ross's own son was examined, and said they were not constantly employed.

679. And Ross wished to tender more evidence, but the Magistrate would not allow him?—Yes.

680. Did the evidence given in Court satisfy you that Ross had not complied with his instructions?—Yes, most certainly; and I do not see how Inspector Hull could help putting a man on when he knew what had taken place. He could not possibly avoid it.

681. Was there anything in the proceedings to lead you to suppose or to conclude that this action was the result of bad feeling between the farmers?—I heard afterwards that there had been unpleasantness between them. I am not quite sure, but I believe you (Mr. McKenzie) were the first person to tell me.

Mr. McKenzie: I told you, I think, that I was the former occupier of the land; that Duncan has 400 acres there; and that he expects his neighbours to do all his rabbiting for him.

682. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] These men, I understand, were put on to protect Duncan's crop?—Yes; Duncan made a written complaint, and, of course, Hull had to take notice of it. He told Ross he wished the work to be done on Duncan's boundary to protect his crops. Had he wanted Ross to put men over all his land it would have needed seven or eight. It was only this particular corner.

683. And it cost him £2?—Yes.

684. *Mr. Kerr.*] Are you satisfied that he did not put on the men?—He did not do what he promised to do.

685. *Captain Russell.*] When Ross was ordered to put on this man, were the rabbits on other properties, or was this a remote place?—Rabbits were all about.

686. Why were not the other owners compelled to put on rabbiters as well?—As far as that is there were no complaints. The matter was left in abeyance until the poisoning season.

687. What I want particularly to know is this: were the rabbits more numerous on Mr. Ross's land than the adjoining properties?—No.

688. Then, do you not think it is reasonable to suppose that Mr. Ross should have been grieved, being singled out and so treated?—When Duncan first complained Inspector Hull specially told him (Ross) his reasons—that a complaint had been made. Therefore, Hull was bound to take action.

689. You have not been able to ascertain, I suppose, why Mr. Hull did not take a more general view of the question, and go through the whole district: why he did not examine his district?—I do not see that there would have been any benefit in his compelling every one to put on men at that time.

690. Is it not likely to lead to great dissatisfaction if the operation of the Act is not made general?—This was a particular case.

691. I ask you, is it not likely to lead to dissatisfaction?—If you just picked out one or two, of course, it would. This was a special case. There was no idea to exterminate the rabbits; it was simply to keep a couple of men on his boundary to prevent the rabbits from destroying this man Duncan's turnips. Had Hull known the district he would not have waited for any complaint.

He was a perfect stranger, being only appointed in October, and before he got to know the different farmers the rabbits had considerably increased.

692. Then, is it not unwise that Inspectors' actions should be guided by complaints from neighbours instead of generally knowing the facts himself?—Yes; I think it would be unwise.

693. Then, do you not think it is natural that Mr. Ross should have felt grieved?—Yes; I dare say that may be so, but I think, when an explanation was given him, he should have fallen in with the suggestions. If he had put men on himself it would not have cost him 10s. He would have had the value of the skins, so that he would have had a man at 5s. or 10s. per week.

694. *Mr. McKenzie.*] Duncan's farm is about four hundred acres, in the centre of tussocks?—Yes.

695. If land is cultivated in the centre of a run it attracts the rabbits like a plate of sugar does flies.

696. This is the first time, I believe, this 11th section of the Act has been put into operation?—It is, I believe, the first time in Dunback district; but I cannot speak for certain.

697. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Then, you consider it should be an act of common kindness when a man has a crop in, and his neighbour's land is covered with rabbits, that his neighbour should, out of kindness, put a man on during the time the crops are there?—Yes.

698. That is the view taken by yourself?—Yes.

699. And that was the reason that other neighbours were not treated in the same way as Ross?—Yes.

700. Does trapping rabbits frighten them away?—Yes; you frighten them back to the rough gullies. Inspector Hull thought it would be a shame not to try and save this man's crop for the sake of a pound or two.

701. *Mr. Lance.*] Is it not a fact that Bell put on two men for the purpose of keeping this man's crop from being destroyed?—Yes.

702. Bell is Duncan's principal neighbour?—Bell's boundary-line runs down along Duncan's property about 50 chains.

703. *Mr. Kerr.*] It seems a strange fact to me that the men who knew the district should be discharged, especially when a new Inspector came to the place: what was the reason I should like to know?—There were objections to him (Doris), but I do not think I am called upon to give reasons.

704. It seems strange to me that two men should be got rid of at once, and two new men come on who did not know the district. He would have got more information if he had appointed the other agent?—He might have got wrong information.

705. You say there was some reason for not appointing the old man?—Yes.

706. *Mr. Duncan.*] Is it generally known that you are responsible for the actions of your subordinates? Is it known in a general way?—I think so. It appeared in all the papers when the new orders came into force.

707. Do you think, for instance, it is known in the district I come from—Waitaki—that you are responsible for the action of the Inspectors in that district?—I should fancy that they all knew. If they had any complaint to make I expect they would write to me.

708. I am of another opinion. I think they would write to the Minister in charge of the department if they had any complaint to make. This is the general feeling there?—There may be some persons who think so; but the more intellectual class know that I am responsible.

709. Is it the case that if any one makes a complaint that his crop is being destroyed that the neighbours must put men on to trap?—If an Inspector receives a written complaint from any one he is bound to inquire into the circumstance, and take action accordingly.

710. Are you aware whether Hull examined Duncan's property at the time?—I cannot say that he had or had not, but I should fancy he had. There might have been one or two gullies on Duncan's land with rabbits in.

711. What is your experience with regard to men being put on the land joining crop to save it?—I understand that a portion of this crop was no good; that was the destroyed portion, which was cut on the 21st April.

712. It must have been a late crop: do you know whether it was cut or standing at the time of this dispute?—I cannot say. I think it was turnips more than oats.

713. What would be the effect if there were a lot of settlers in the district situated in the same position to Duncan?—Well, they would have to be protected to a certain extent. It is one of the most difficult things to know how to act in such cases. When a man takes up and cultivates a sheltered piece of land in a valley it acts as an attraction to the rabbits; they swarm on to his place from all round the poorer land. I consider a man having a freehold cultivated should go to a little more expense himself in keeping rabbits out.

714. It is not shown on any of the evidence that Duncan took any steps to get the rabbits down himself: do you know if he did?—I cannot say; but I do not think it is likely that the Inspector would have called on anybody else unless Duncan had been doing good work himself.

715. *Mr. Lawry.*] You are satisfied that Hull was bound to make inquiry and act as he did?—Yes.

716. And, as there was no formal complaint against any other but Ross, he was not bound to take action generally?—Just so.

717. Do you think it is necessary to alter the Act in cases like the present for the purpose of preventing persecution?—I do not see any occasion for altering the Act. So far as I am aware, there has not been a single case proved against an Inspector for persecuting any one. Inspectors never carry out extreme measures.

718. And you did not consider it necessary to give a general intimation because of the simultaneous poisoning which was to take place in June?—Just so.

719. *Mr. Buchanan.*] What means did you adopt to take these rabbits?—Trapping.

720. How many rabbits did you kill?—I believe, about 310 in two weeks.

721. In giving a runowner notice, do you think it is right to instruct him to put on men to kill rabbits, but to say nothing whatever as to how he is to destroy them?—It depends upon circumstances. I think myself, and I have been blamed for it, that if a man asks you, in fairness, you should give him some idea, but not commit yourself. The Inspector must not bind himself, because he might suggest certain measures which prove a failure, and other measures are then required.

722. You have given some very strange answers in regard to individual landholders. Supposing now, for instance, I have a small farm: I am poisoning off the rabbits myself, but I have no wish to destroy the good feeling between my neighbours, and so do not inform that he is not killing off rabbits: do you not think it is the Inspector's duty to take a general view of the whole district, and not wait till complaints come to him?—Most certainly he should not wait for complaints in the ordinary course. Generally speaking, throughout the year, he should see for himself. At this time it was a few weeks off the regular poison season, and I recommended him not to push matters until it had commenced, and then follow up after.

723. Take two landowners. One last winter did his duty in keeping rabbits down, the other did not. The month of February arrives, and the man's land that did his duty is getting bad again on account of his neighbour who did nothing: I understand from you the Inspector is to look on without giving any relief to the man who is getting eaten out because the proper poisoning has not arrived?—If the Inspector was there at the previous poisoning he should not have allowed the rabbits to have increased so.

724. Then, I am to assume that the rabbits being so thick, some one was not doing his duty the year before?—They may have been poisoning right enough, but action was not followed up in October.

GEORGE ROSS examined on oath.

725. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—George Ross.

726. Where do you reside?—At Dunback.

727. You are a settler there, and signed the petition (read)?—Yes.

728. Will you state in a general way anything you wish to tell the Committee in connection with the petition?—Well, I may say that the Inspector called on me on 2nd April; this was the first time I saw him, and he then asked me if I had done certain work on my boundary, known as "Duncan's boundary." I told him that I had put men there, and he said, "That's all right." Shortly after this I met him on the road, when he told me had placed two men on my land. I said I was surprised at that, because I considered what I had done was sufficient. I was threshing at the time, and I said, "As soon as I got that over I would at once start poisoning." The Inspector replied, "Don't do that, but wait till the 1st June." I was threshing at the time, and very busy, and that as soon as I was done I would start poisoning; that would be in a few days. I told him shortly after the last interview that I did not see why I should be picked out as an exceptional case.

729. Have you anything else to tell?—I was very displeased at being brought to Court. It was enough to drive a man out of the place, because the whole of the district was bad with rabbits. Mine was no worse than anybody else's, and it seemed very hard to me that the Inspector should only take action against myself and Lindsay.

730. Did not Mr. Hull tell you that a complaint had been made against you by Duncan, stating that your rabbits were destroying his crops?—Yes; he told me, and that was the reason I put the men on to keep the place free from rabbits.

731. He requested you to do that?—Yes; and I told him I had done so, and that if one was not sufficient I would put on more.

732. Was this man you put on doing anything else but looking after the rabbits on this boundary?—No.

733. And after that the Inspector sent up the men?—Yes; and my man was there working the same day.

734. *Mr. Kerr.*] You say you had a man working there when the Inspector's men were sent up?—Yes.

735. Did you complain especially to Mr. Hull putting these men on at your expense?—Yes; because I was doing my utmost to keep the rabbits down.

736. And you were afterwards summoned before the Resident Magistrate?—Yes; for the men's wages, and I defended the case. I think, all through I have been badly treated, and been put to unnecessary expense.

737. Had you any reason to suppose that the Inspector had a grudge against you?—No; I have no reason to think that.

738. Were you and Duncan on bad terms?—There was a bad feeling existing on Duncan's part, but not on mine. I never had any words with him.

739. But, as Duncan complained, was it not necessary under the Act that the Inspector should take the steps he did?—I was doing all I was asked to do. He expressed himself, when he saw me, as being very well satisfied with what I did. I should have been surprised if he had said otherwise.

740. *Mr. Lance.*] He was quite satisfied with what you were doing?—Yes.

741. As a matter of fact, had you always these men there?—To the best of my knowledge, they were only off a couple of days.

742. Were they not always there?—They were away two or three days, as the rabbits were shy; but they were on the ground the day the Inspector brought up the men, and I was not aware that they were there until I met Hull on the road.

743. Do you know of your own knowledge that the man was always there?—I could see him night and morning as he was passing through to his work.

744. *Captain Russell.*] Why did you not apply to the head of the department—the Chief Inspector—instead of taking the course you did?—I did not think it would be of any use. The administration of the Rabbit Act is a farce.

745. In what way?—In carrying out the measures of the Act.

746. Then, you wish this Committee to understand that the reason you did not apply to the head officer was because you considered the whole administration of the Act was bad?—Just so.

747. You were put to Court expenses?—Yes.

748. But you were only fined £2: how was it your expenses were so large?—I had to engage a solicitor and get witnesses in support of my case.

749. Had you a solicitor in the district?—Yes; but the Inspector had engaged him for the purpose of putting me to extra expense.

750. Have you ever read the Act yourself?—A portion of it, but not all.

751. Did you not know that the case was almost certain to go against you?—Well, I thought the justice of the affair would commend itself to the Resident Magistrate; but, to my surprise, he would not listen to anything, and would not even allow my witnesses to be called.

752. Then, why did you not apply to the head of the department up here?—I did not know the proper course to adopt.

753. Why did you petition the Government instead of going through the ordinary channels?—The solicitor I had in the case drew up the petition.

754. And you had no special object?—No; I left it in his hands to do it.

755. Having lived in a rabbit district so long, can you suggest any alteration to the Act which would make its work more beneficial to the settlers in killing and keeping down the rabbits?—I think it would be better if the district was put under the control of a Rabbit Board; it would be much better that there should be one Inspector responsible for each district, and, if it was seen he was not doing his duty, to dismiss him.

756. *Mr. McKenzie.*] When you brought your case before the Court, the Magistrate refused to hear your evidence?—Yes; he only heard my two boys.

757. What did the Magistrate say?—He said it was useless for me to bring forward any more witnesses. As long as the Inspector said that I had not done the work the Magistrate had no alternative but to fine me.

758. Your general complaint is that you have been exceptionally treated, considering the nature of the district?—Just so.

759. The others have as many rabbits on their place as you?—Yes.

760. And you consider that putting the 11th section of the Act into force was unfair to you?—I consider I have been very unfairly dealt with all through the case.

761. The Inspector stated that his reasons for departing from the usual course in your case was from the complaint made to him by Duncan; have you been harassed before this?—Yes; before this.

762. Can you bring any evidence before this Committee to show that Duncan complained to the Inspector before the agent went on the ground?—Yes; there is a gentleman in Wellington now who can say something on this question. I asked him to examine the ground about the neighbourhood.

763. This is Agent Dorris?—Yes.

764. Would you like him to be examined?—Yes, I would.

765. Has Duncan got down the rabbits himself?—No; I poisoned my ground on the 7th May, and up to the 20th June Duncan had done nothing, nor has he been asked to. I have taken particular notice of what has been going on.

766. Do you mean this year?—Yes.

767. He has not been compelled to do it?—No; he did not do it. He had done nothing up to the 20th June.

768. Douglass has put in a memorandum that he had been over most of the farms in the district, and had found rabbits pretty numerous?—Yes; he was there on the 15th of this month. I have a neighbour, a widow woman, and there were a few rabbits on her place, and she is allowing them to go on. There is a sandy bank on her boundary which is a good breeding-ground for them. They come out to my place, but I poison the boundary, and I took men to dig them out; but they only got three.

769. What would be the area of this piece?—About a quarter of an acre. I put on a couple of men, and after two days' digging they got three rabbits. That was since I received notice on the 15th instant.

770. Did you see Douglass on that occasion?—Yes; he said there was a letter in the post-office that would touch me up.

771. It was not Hull that said you were a stubborn fellow?—No; Douglass.

772. And this piece of land where the rabbits were was only about a quarter of an acre?—That is all.

773. You dug all over the place and only found three?—Yes; so I told the men to knock off, after they had been working for two days.

774. And being used in this way you consider you have been exceptionally treated?—Yes.

775. *Mr. Dodson.*] You say your solicitor drew up this petition?—Yes.

776. Did you read it?—Yes.

777. And it is all true?—To the best of my knowledge it is.

778. You stand to all the clauses now?—I cannot recollect them all.

779. Now, about the Resident Magistrate censuring the Inspector: is that true?—Yes; I am perfectly satisfied that is true.

780. If you were told that the Resident Magistrate denied it would you still adhere to what you say?—Yes.

781. You wish that taken down in your evidence?—Yes.
782. You have made a complaint that the Resident Magistrate would not allow you to bring sufficient evidence forward?—Yes; the Magistrate and my solicitor had a conversation together, and then he said it was no use bringing any more evidence.
783. Was it because he was satisfied without?—Yes; I suppose so.
784. And you were grieved because you were not allowed to call your witnesses?—Yes; I had one important witness.
785. Is this the first inquiry that has been held in connection with this district?—No; there have been several. I was once before before a Court myself.
786. For not complying with the Rabbit Act?—Yes.
787. Were you the person who asked for that inquiry?—No; I was only examined as a witness.
788. You believe that the administration of the Rabbit Act in your district is a complete farce?—Yes.
789. And that is the general opinion of the settlers?—Yes. There have been two or three public meetings held, because the settlers have seen how I have been harassed by the department.
790. Is it the Act that is bad, or is it simply the administration of it?—The Act gives too much power to one individual. If he has got a “set” on you he could ruin you.
791. You told us just now that you poisoned on the 7th May: is it not a fact that June was the time fixed for a simultaneous poisoning?—Yes; but you must consider the nature of the locality. I commenced earlier. When the wet weather sets in the poisoning is a failure, as a rule. I think both in May and April is the best time to poison, before the wet weather sets in.
792. Is there more grass in June than May?—If it has been wet there is.
793. But June was the date fixed by the Inspector?—No; I did not agree to that. If I had waited till June it would not have been a success. I commenced on the 2nd, and I poisoned Duncan’s boundary on the 7th.
794. Was there anything in Hull’s manner that appeared at all aggravating?—No.
795. What did he say to you?—He asked me to keep a man on this boundary for a time.
796. One man?—Yes; and I kept a man on. He said he did not wish anybody to start poisoning until June.
797. And you had a man put on?—Yes.
798. And he was there when Hull’s man came up?—Yes.
799. Who was the man he put on?—A man named Bell.
800. Who was your man?—My own son.
801. Was he there all the day?—Yes.
802. And did no other work?—No.
803. Have you read his evidence given before the Court?—No; that was before he went on this particular portion of ground that that evidence referred to.
804. You must keep to the point: I mean the days in question?—He was there three weeks, from the 2nd to the 19th April, but two or three days of that time he was off, as I have already stated.
805. The general impression seems to be that he was occasionally there—only of an evening?—I have three sons, and they changed work, and there was always one or two rabbiting.
806. When you heard that 26th June was fixed, did you make it known that you would begin in May?—All the settlers agreed to start on 13th May.
807. At the meeting, was the Inspector present?—Yes.
808. And the Inspector stated June?—Yes; the settlers wanted May, but the Inspector inserted a notice in the papers saying it would be June.
809. Now, what about those expenses: all you were summoned for was £2, was it not?—Yes.
810. What was the Court expenses?—They would have been about £5.
811. When you found out that you had broken the Act, if you had paid the £2 and the Court expenses, that would have been all you would have been asked to pay?—Yes, I suppose so.
812. But you engaged a solicitor?—Yes.
813. And you wish to have it refunded?—Yes; if I was brought unjustly before a tribunal without just cause I do.
814. But you lost the case?—Yes.
815. Then, how do you consider you were unjustly treated?—Because I was “spotted” out as an individual to be tried different to all the others.
816. You complain that Bell took no steps at this time to clear off the rabbits?—No; I believe he did not.
817. We have it in evidence that he put on three men, and kept them on Duncan’s boundary?—I did not see them.
818. You never saw Bell’s man?—No.
819. Is it not true then?—They might have been there, but I never saw them.

TUESDAY, 27TH AUGUST, 1889. (Hon. Mr. ACLAND, Chairman.)

Mr. Ross’s examination continued.

820. *Mr. McKenzie.*] Who is in occupation of the land at the front of your property at Dunback?—Mr. Bell.
821. Who poisoned it last winter?—One of his shepherds.
822. And he joins you at the river at the back of Kitchens?—Yes.
823. How many chains does he join your place?—About 160 altogether—55 chains at the top and 90 chains in front. At the river there are 10 or 12 chains.

824. It has been stated by Douglass that all the expense you were put to was £2 : had you any other expenses?—I went three times to Dunedin. I had to knock off a couple of teams and bring my two sons to Court. The annoyance of the thing was worse than all the money, and the agent was allowed his expenses against me in Court.

825. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What was the actual amount charged for the rabbiters?—£2.

826. *Mr. McKenzie.*] You stated yesterday you had a man on the land, except the three days when the rabbits were getting shy?—Yes; they became frightened, and could not be got at. I was going to start poisoning.

827. And you had a man on the ground the day the Inspector sent his man up?—Yes.

828. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Did you comply with the instructions of the Inspector as soon as you received them?—Yes. On the 2nd April I saw him first, and he asked me to put a man on. I said that I had already done so.

829. Did Duncan sustain much injury?—No.

830. How much crop had he?—About eight or ten acres of turnips on my boundary.

831. No more?—There were some oats, but not on my boundary.

832. Was not the crop cut before April?—Yes; it was turnips that he complained of.

833. Is it just an ordinary wire fence between you?—Yes; there was no gorse, simply a wire fence.

834. *Mr. Lance.*] You said yesterday you were guided by the person who drew up your petition?—I did not say that.

835. Who drew up your petition?—Mr. W. Stout.

836. He took up the case for you?—Yes; I asked him to draw up the petition because he was acquainted with the case.

JAMES DORIS, examined on oath.

837. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—James Doris.

838. *Mr. McKenzie.*] What are you at present?—Well, I have no following at present, but I have been employed in the Rabbit Department.

839. You at present reside in Wellington?—Yes.

840. You know Mr. George Ross?—Yes.

841. Will you tell this Committee what you know of this case?—Well, I met Mr. Ross one day at Palmerston, about the time the men had been put on his ground by the Inspector, and he asked me to see the state of rabbits on adjoining land. I did not go over Ross's land at this time, but over the adjoining lands—Bell's run—and there I found the rabbits very thick.

842. *Hon. the Chairman.*] On Bell's run?—Yes.

843. Does the portion of the run you refer to come on to Ross's land?—Yes; I also went round the boundary, over Lindsay's ground.

844. During this time did Duncan make any complaints?—He had about November, 1887.

845. Did you go all over the land?—I did by order of the Inspector. I went and saw Duncan, and requested him to come with me over Bell's run, and there we saw plenty of rabbits. We crossed Duncan's land to Ross's, and we met Ross's rabbitier at the boundary with a large team of dogs and a bundle of rabbits. I thought it would be of little use going further for the purpose of seeing rabbits, because they would have all been disturbed by the rabbitier and his dogs.

846. You saw Duncan's land at this time?—Yes; it was pretty clear of rabbits at this time. The next morning, in order to satisfy myself as to how Ross's place was, I went over it early, and so could form a good idea of what it was like. I found the rabbits were then about the same as on Duncan's. I reported the matter to Inspector.

847. *Mr. Lance.*] When was this?—In November, 1887.

848. *Mr. McKenzie.*] When you were agent, had you any difficulty in getting Ross to comply with the law?—No; I served all alike. When a complaint was made to the Inspector they were served with notices, and, after doing so, I always found that Ross did fair work. I never had any trouble with him. His land lies under high land of Bell's, and rabbits are liable to make their way down on fresh grass on low land of Ross. In 1887 I visited a place in Green Valley, and on my return Duncan again complained against Bell that he had done no work since my last visit. I went on the ground and found rabbits still bad. I then reported the matter to the Inspector. This was a fortnight after Duncan's first complaint.

849. *Hon. the Chairman.*] How long is it since you have been there?—I was there about the 9th May last.

850. This year?—Yes. At the request of Ross I went over the place because I knew the district.

851. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Then, when you went over this district at this time you were in no particular capacity? No; just as a private individual.

852. At Ross's request? Yes; about the time the Inspector put the men on the boundary.

853. Had Ross's neighbours men employed?—I could not say. I know Lindsay had men employed, and he was summoned with Ross.

854. *Mr. McKenzie.*] Had you been on the land shortly before Ross had been summoned?—Yes.

855. Were you there before the men were put on?—No.

856. After this you did not see many rabbits?—I was not on Ross's land; I was on the adjoining country, and saw plenty.

857. Had Bell men working on his land at this time?—I saw no indications of anything being done.

858. Did you see many rabbits?—Yes; and Ross felt grieved that no one else was killing them off.

859. *Captain Russell.*] You say, you never went on Ross's land at all?—No.

860. How do you know, then, that he was employing labour?—Ross said that the Inspector had employed men, and this is what grieved him.

861. But you did not go on to Ross's property?—No; I went to see the state of the adjoining country.

862. But you did not know what Ross was doing?—No.

863. Nor Bell?—No.

864. How long were you on Bell's land?—I crossed over to Waihemo and started along the back settlement.

865. Would the fact of you going across the land like that justify you in forming the opinion that no men were at work there?—All I can say is that I did not see any.

866. How far off Duncan's land was it where you crossed over?—About six chains or so.

867. What time of the day?—In the evening. I never saw rabbits so plentiful. I went by way of the Green Valley, and I never saw them so thick.

868. You went over at the wish of Ross?—Yes.

869. To see what state the country was in?—Yes.

870. How was it you did not go on Ross's land?—He did not ask me. He wished me to go over the adjoining country, to see what was being done.

871. You knew he had a grievance?—He had not been summoned at this time.

872. *Mr. Lawry.*] Were you subpoenaed to give evidence in the Court case?—Yes.

873. Did you give evidence?—No.

874. You were not allowed to give it?—No.

875. Do you think you were asked by Ross to go over the land so as you could give your opinion as a witness?—Yes; I presume so.

876. *Mr. Dodson.*] Is that the reason you did not go into Ross's place?—He did not ask me.

877. You think you qualified yourself as a witness without going on Ross's land?—Ross simply asked me to see the state of the country.

878. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You were subpoenaed by Ross, you say?—Yes.

879. Were you present in Court?—Yes.

880. *Mr. Dodson.*] Did you hear the Magistrate censure the Inspector?—Yes; and so strong was he that every one present thought the case was going against him. The Inspector gave some hearsay evidence, but he is supposed first of all to have made a minute inspection of the ground to find out for himself whether or not the landowner was doing his work, and that if it was found he was not complying with the notice sent he should be brought before the Court. On this occasion the Inspector did not make a minute inspection of the ground—

Mr. Dodson: This is going too far.

Mr. McKenzie: Not at all. The witness is only telling us what occurred in Court.

Witness: The Magistrate expressed displeasure at the Inspector employing a solicitor, and so saddling the defendant with unnecessary costs.

881. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Was that said in Court?—Yes. The Magistrate said the Inspector should be competent to conduct his own case, and that he should have visited the ground between service of notice and proceedings, so as to form his opinion. The Magistrate gave judgment on hearsay evidence, which is not allowed by law.

THURSDAY, 29TH AUGUST, 1889.

EDMUND CLIFTON examined.

882. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—Edmund Clifton.

883. And you are a Rabbit Inspector?—Yes.

884. You were formerly at Dunedin?—Yes.

885. When you left what state were the rabbits in at Waihemo District?—I left that district in September, shortly after we had had a most successful poisoning season, and the rabbits at that time were pretty well reduced.

886. The reason I ask you is this: We have had it from evidence, given both by Mr. Douglass and Mr. Hull, that the rabbits were in a pretty bad state when they arrived there. Did you make an inspection at the time of your leaving?—No; not exactly. It would probably be about the month of May.

887. You had a Sub-Inspector named Quarterly?—Yes.

888. Inspector Douglass took charge after you left?—Yes.

889. Did Quarterly leave of his own accord?—Yes. He asked to be removed to a more northern subdivision, I think on account of some family reasons.

890. It was not at the request of the department?—No.

891. *Mr. McKenzie.*] When you left the district you dispensed with Agent Dorris?—Yes.

892. Did you recommend Quarterly to do that?—I did not exactly recommend it, but I suggested to Sub-Inspector Hull it would be as well not to take him on again.

893. Will you give your reason?—So far as giving a reason, I do not think I should be called upon to do that. Dorris was just in the same position as a common servant, and when you find you do not require him you dismiss him. The position of Agent is just the same; but, apart from that, when I first went to Dunedin my first work was the reorganization of the staff. Four Sub-Inspectors had to go, and four Agents. Dorris was one of them.

894. *Mr. Lance.*] These Agents just receive day-wages?—Yes. Later on in the year, when the poisoning season came round, we wanted some one, and Dorris was taken on temporarily: he was not employed permanently.

895. *Mr. McKenzie.*] What reason did you give that he was not to be taken on?—I did not give any specified reason. I considered him the wrong sort of man to have in the department. His manner was irritating; and this was most objectionable in connection with notices, &c.

896. Did he not serve you properly?—If you ask me to mention any particular instance, the probability is I could not give it; but altogether his action while employed as a Rabbit Agent gave me sufficient reasons for dispensing with his services.

897. Did he neglect his duty?—I would not say that, but I doubted his impartiality in carrying out his duties, and I also doubted his loyalty to the Sub-Inspector.

898. Is he not supposed to keep a diary which is sent to the Sub-Inspector?—Yes.

899. Then, could not the Sub-Inspector satisfy himself as to the man's loyalty?—Still he might cause endless trouble. The fact was I did not consider him a suitable officer to be employed.

900. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You are Inspector for Wairarapa?—Yes; for Wellington West Coast Sheep District.

901. Would you give this Committee the state of the country in that district in regard to the rabbits?—Yes. It would perhaps be better if I were to divide the district into two parts, taking North Wairarapa first. There has never been any attempt to introduce the natural enemy to any appreciable extent there.

902. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] What is the boundary of North Wairarapa?—Its southern boundary commences at the mouth of the Kaiwhata River, and then takes a generally north-western direction to the Tararuas, and follows this range to Hawke's Bay boundary.

903. Does it take in Greytown?—No. Greytown is in South Wairarapa. It appears that in North Wairarapa the people were made to work in keeping the rabbits down, and the consequence was that so long as they worked they were kept in check, but immediately the work was relaxed the rabbits increased again. Last autumn the rabbits were exceedingly numerous. I came to this district in October last, and before any action was taken it was considered expedient to leave it until it could be attacked properly by a systematic poisoning. This has been done most successfully, and in following it up I have instituted numerous prosecutions under the Rabbit Act. I now hope the rabbits will be kept in something like check until the natural enemy is introduced, and this is being done, under the provisions of the Act, by a Rabbit Board.

904. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Is that Board formed?—It is being formed.

905. In the South Wairarapa a great many rabbits have been destroyed by the clearing the country of scrub and the introduction of the natural enemy. To show the good effect that the introduction of the natural enemy has: I may state that the people were so satisfied that they abandoned introducing any more; now the rabbits are on the increase again, and several prosecutions have been instituted.

906. When do you say they have increased?—Throughout last autumn.

907. You consider poisoning and the introduction of the natural enemy are the best remedies?—I think poisoning, introduction of the natural enemy, and rabbit-proof fencing are the best remedies; but the three must go together.

908. Are you in favour of wire-net fencing?—Certainly, after seeing the good results of it.

909. Do you think it will absolutely stop rabbits?—It does in some instances, where it is properly attended to.

910. In your opinion it requires constant attention?—Yes. In regard to the wire-netted fencing I may refer to instances in the South Island where it was absolutely impossible to keep the rabbits down without it.

911. Where was this?—In Marlborough. I should like to mention Mr. Buller, of Kaikoura, who owns part of the Kaikoura Peninsula, where, year after year, 15,000 rabbits were taken. He fenced his land across from sea to sea, and since then he has had nothing to do beyond a man attending to the fence and sometimes destroying a young rabbit. I would also mention a place in the Awatere, in Marlborough, infested to such an extent, and the sheep so reduced, that there was no profit till wire-netted fence was erected. Two years later the manager reported an increase of wool by tons. This increase was quoted during the hearing of a lawsuit at Blenheim.

912. Do you know Mr. Coleman Phillips?—Yes.

913. Is his country free from rabbits?—About March he was killing fifty or sixty a month.

914. He is, I understand, a believer in the rabbit-disease?—Yes.

915. What is your opinion about it?—I have seen traces of the bladder-fluke from Wairarapa to Southland, but it does not seem to be of much effect.

916. *Mr. Lance.*] The same disease as is in the Wairarapa?—Yes, the same.

917. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your opinion about trapping?—I only wish it were possible to prohibit it altogether.

918. It destroys the natural enemy?—Yes.

919. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Which is the best, in your opinion—stoats, ferrets, or weasels?—I can scarcely tell, because, so far as stoats and weasels are concerned, they have mostly been turned out in the far-back country, and there has been little or no opportunity of judging how they have got along; but I should say the weasel and stoat are more desirable, because they are stronger than the ferret and not so liable to distemper.

920. Do you think, if you turned out the whole three before poisoning in a limited place they would practically diminish the rabbits?—It would depend greatly upon the nature of the place.

921. Can you get rid of the rabbits without poisoning?—No.

922. You mean to say you cannot keep them down without?—No; they must first be reduced by poison.

923. But can you poison everywhere?—I know of no country where it would be impossible to poison; but in the back country, on high, long, flat-topped ranges, as about Dunstan, snow may be 20ft. deep. There rabbits are destroyed almost as much by poisoning, and in spring their skeletons are seen about the crevices of the rocks.

924. *Mr. Lance.*] And at Malvern Hills?—Yes.

925. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Do you know of any instance where the natural enemies have done damage to lambs?—So far, none at all.

926. Are there not instances of their having done damage to poultry?—I have known of ferrets destroying fowls; but this is done, as a rule, by the tame ones that have been liberated about homesteads.

927. Is there any possibility of them increasing to be a worse pest than the rabbits?—No.

928. Would they die out if the rabbits died out?—Yes, I think so.

929. *Mr. Lance.*] Is the department doing anything in regard to the breeding of ferrets?—No.

930. Nothing is being done in the colony?—No.

931. Why has it been put a stop to?—I am unable to say. I applied for permission to breed some.

932. Has the Minister of the department given any reasons for stopping the supply?—I am aware of none.

933. Do you not think it would be a good thing to encourage the breeding of ferrets?—Most decidedly. Until we encourage the breeding of ferrets and introduce stoats and weasels we shall not make any real progress, and with the assistance of the Act where the settlers are negligent I believe rabbits can be kept down. My experience is, the moment prosecutions are abandoned the rabbits increase again, and to a greater number than before, if the natural enemy is not introduced.

934. *Hon. Mr. Wigley.*] Did you see a circular about rabbits issued in Australia—killing off the does?—Yes.

935. I am informed that about Lake Wanaka the rabbits were considerably diminished last year: do you know the cause of it? Is it owing to the natural enemy or the survival of the fittest?—When you take an isolated area like that it is not safe to say what the reasons are. In some instances rabbits seem to take to or leave a place inexplicably.

936. *Mr. Buchanan.*] In evidence which came before this Committee some days ago we were told that the number of the natural enemy liberated in South Wairarapa was about a thousand, besides stoats and weasels. Have you any means of knowing what is the correct number?—No; no more than I understood that was so.

937. Now as to North Wairarapa. Would you be surprised to learn that that number was increased?—That may be, and on account of the owners of property trapping. Ferrets in North Wairarapa never had a fair chance: if one man turned them out his next neighbour would be trapping, or using large packs of dogs.

938. Would you be surprised to learn that on Brancepeth alone a larger number were turned out than there was in South Wairarapa altogether?—Yes, I should be surprised.

939. Are you aware, at Bowland's, and some of the larger runs, ferrets have been turned out?—I know a considerable number was turned out, and we also recognised the fact that trapping and hunting with large packs of dogs was carried on at the same time.

940. Would you be surprised to know, on some of the stations where ferrets were numerous once, they were found dying with distemper and crawling about in a sickly, weak state?—This has already happened in some places in the South Island. When you start putting ferrets out very many always disappear. After you begin turning them out you must keep on doing so every year, for a certain number must be turned out to keep up the number, as losses occur through distemper.

941. Taking North Wairarapa, for instance, is it not possible that disease and trapping has been mainly instrumental in bringing them (ferrets) down?—This may have been the case, and in the North Island altogether I think distemper kills off more than in the South.

942. I have heard, in regard to these prosecutions, several complaints. Is it true that a farmer residing close to Tauherenikau has been fined £5?—There were two or three in that district fined.

943. Was not one of the persons so fined living close to Greytown?—There was one close to the river; but his frontage is on the Tauherenikau, and near Featherston.

944. Do you know the amount of the fines inflicted?—£5 each.

945. Have you anything to say to the Committee as to the fairness of inflicting the same amount on all?—I think there should be a distinction between the small farmer and the large runholder.

946. Have you any suggestion to make so that a restriction could be made in regard to the amounts of the fines?—I think it might be left to the discretion of the Resident Magistrate.

947. *Mr. Dodson.*] How high does the fine go up?—£100.

948. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] You say you would stop trapping if you could?—Yes, because so many of the natural enemy suffer; and the same applies to hunting with large packs of dogs.

949. *Mr. Laury.*] I suppose it would be to the interests of the rabbitier to kill the natural enemy?—Yes.

950. Do they breed the first year?—I could not say.

951. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] Are stoats and weasels subject to distemper?—No; not so much as ferrets.

952. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Do you think there is any danger of their eating poisoned rabbits?—Yes.

953. *Mr. Buchanan.*] What about poisoned larks?—A certain number of ferrets are always found dead after poisoning, and it is not reasonable to expect otherwise when it is remembered that the rabbit, the food they live on, has been destroyed by poison, and that they eat the very last portion of what they find.

Witness: I should like to ask if it were possible to devise some means of assisting the smaller owners to erect wire-netting fencing. It would be beneficial if aid could be given them in the same way as under the Local Bodies' Loans Act, making such advance a first charge on the property.

954. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Do you think it should be made a legal fence?—Yes, in rabbit-infested districts.

955. Would it not come expensive on the small owners?—They could keep their rabbits down. I dare say it would be a hardship in some cases.

Witness : I would like to refer to clause 18 of the Rabbit Nuisance Act 1882 Amendment Act. The difficulty is, the Board take over the administration, but at the same time it is stated in that clause that the powers of the Chief Inspector are not interfered with, and by that section he may be held responsible for the state of the rabbits in such district. In one instance I know of rabbits having increased since the Rabbit Board was formed. What action should be taken in such circumstances?

956. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What time?—About three years.

957. That is, during the last three years the rabbits have increased?—Yes.

958. Is that district under your charge?—No; I spoke of it because a part of this district will shortly be under a Rabbit Board.

WEDNESDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER, 1889.

RICHARD HULL examined on oath.

959. *Mr. Duncan.*] What state was Duncan's land in when you served the notice on Ross?—I did not see any rabbits, but saw where they had been. I saw where he had been trapping and working, and Duncan told me himself that he and his boys were always doing something. When I was there his boy was working. I did not see any rabbits.

960. What time of the day was it when you were there—the middle of the day or evening?—I think it was between 11 o'clock and 3 o'clock.

961. Was the crop growing at this time. I mean, was it standing up sufficiently to be a cover to rabbits?—No, not at this corner.

962. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] What date was this?—In March, I think.

963. *Mr. Dodson.*] But there were only turnips there?—Yes; when I took action in April the other crop was cut and part destroyed.

964. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What crop was it that had been eaten?—Oats.

965. *Mr. Duncan.*] In your opinion, do you think Duncan did what was fair in keeping his part of the land clear?—Yes; I think he had done everything up to this time, but, of course, I could not say what he had done previously. There was abundance of evidence that he had been rabbiting. If I had not been sure on this point he would have been served the same as Ross.

966. *Mr. McKenzie.*] What time did you fix for poisoning?—The 1st June.

967. Did Duncan poison all his land?—Yes: not all at first.

968. When did he poison the rest?—He poisoned the last in the beginning of July. The reason he gave me for this was that this particular piece of land had sheep on it, but no rabbits. He had finished poisoning the whole of his land before Ross had finished his.

969. Would that not apply to all the other settlers?—You must bear in mind that the portion that Duncan did not poison at first was in cultivation.

970. This was the exact place where Ross was told to keep down his rabbits?—Just so.

971. *Mr. Duncan.*] If you had been told that Ross, with Duncan, had taken no steps before you served notice on him, would that have altered the opinion you have formed?—If I had seen that Duncan had not been at work I should have served him the same; but when I went on his land I saw every evidence of work having been done. There were the marks of traps, and other indications, which convinced me that work in keeping down the rabbits was going on.

972. Was there any such evidence on Ross's place?—No.

TUESDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER, 1889.

EDMUND CLIFTON, Rabbit Inspector, examined.

973. *Mr. Lance.*] I want to ask you, Mr. Clifton, about this petition of Doris's. He says that his diary, which was sent in to the Sub-Inspector, has been altered, and Quarterly's name has been mentioned in connection with it: do you know anything of this?—No.

974. Have you ever heard anything of it?—No; but I at times objected to the length of a great many of the diaries. I required them condensed. There were never any instructions given beyond that.

975. What is the general rule about these diaries?—The agent keeps a pocket-book—or field-book, perhaps, is the best term—in which he enters every day his actual work, the state of the rabbits in his district, &c.; and at the end of the month he copies this and sends it to the Sub-Inspector.

976. And everything in the notebook is condensed in the report?—I cannot say if it is so in every case; I have not seen a great many pocket diaries. I can say my own was always condensed.

977. Then he writes from the diary into a book?—He writes it out on a form supplied by the department from his book. The Sub-Inspector gets it in the first instance from the agent, and he sends it to the Inspector in charge of the district.

978. Is there a duplicate kept? Is there one in Palmerston and one in Wellington?—There should be the field-book, in the first instance, in the Sub-Inspector's office, and there would be a copy of that sent by the agent to the Sub-Inspector, who in turn sends it to the Inspector in charge. Since September, 1888, these remain in the district office, Dunedin; before that they came to Wellington.

979. In fact, there is a duplicate. Who writes this second one?—The evidence by the agent himself.

980. Then, in this case, both of these would have been written by Doris?—Yes; certainly.

981. The petition charges Inspector Quarterly with having superintended the poisoning on Mr. Bell's run when that gentleman was in Sydney?—It is not exactly fair to say that. I understood it was this way: Sub-Inspector Quarterly was authorised by Mr. Bell to instruct his gangers to employ men; but he was not in working charge by any means.

982. Was there anything wrong in this?—I do not recognise anything wrong in it; on the contrary, I thought it was desirable. Quarterly had really no working charge; if he had, I should have objected to it.

983. *Hon. the Chairman.*] About this field-book: would they have it at Palmerston?—It would be in charge of the Sub-Inspector there.

984. Would the agent make a copy of this, or the Sub-Inspector?—The agent himself would make it.

985. And would that be forwarded on to Wellington in the ordinary course of business?—Yes; up to August or September, 1888; since then it would remain in Dunedin.

986. But since then they have not been sent out?—No; the duplicates are kept in charge of the officer of the district. If we send for the book the one that will come up will be the agent's book.

987. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] The book that comes up is the agent's book?—It should be the actual field-book.

988. The sheet that comes up here or goes to the district office is a condensed copy of the book, not identical with the field-book?—No, it is usually a condensed copy.

989. If there were any difference it would not be of any material importance?—No. I know my diary was never exactly copied. I put down items at length, which were always modified.

990. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You have told us that you told some of the agents to condense them?—Yes.

991. Have you ever told Doris to?—I think he was one; there were two agents who sent in their diaries covering eight sheets of paper.

992. You told him to condense, but without making any material alteration?—Yes; they were told to keep them at a reasonable length, as we objected to read through diaries sent in by the yard.

993. *Mr. McKenzie.*] With regard to this diary: is it not a fact that the field-book is the agent's diary?—Yes.

994. And he is supposed to bring his book to the Sub-Inspector?—Yes, when the book is filled up.

995. Does he not bring it in to show what he has seen and what he has done?—Not in all cases.

996. Then, how does the Sub-Inspector know what has been done?—Usually from the condensed copy of the field-book.

997. You say the form that is filled up from the field-book is condensed?—Yes, usually.

998. In a case where an agent had marked something in his diary for a certain day, but in making out his report he had been requested to leave out something, would you consider that a condensed form?—That would be an omission; I required condensation only.

998A. With regard to Quarterly going on to Bell's run, had he your permission?—I believe so, under the conditions described.

999. Would you approve of such actions in all cases?—No; it might require a large number of officers to do so.

1000. But you thought it necessary to make Bell a special favour by allowing Quarterly to superintend. No; it was of the peculiar circumstances of the case, Mr. Bell having gone to Australia on business connected with the Government.

1001. Do you not think it is objectionable for Sub-Inspectors to act like that?—Yes, as a working manager; but, placed as Quarterly was, and taking all circumstances into consideration, I saw nothing objectionable, and I fail to see anything objectionable now.

1002. Suppose an Inspector did act like that—but leaving Bell out of the question—and the poisoning was not successful, and that ultimately he would have to take steps to bring that person to Court, do you think that would be wrong?—Yes; but in this instance it may have been the means of reducing the rabbits on the run.

1003. *Hon. Mr. Wigley.*] Suppose a rabbit agent sends in his report (No. 1) from his field-book, and the Inspector complains of it—finds fault with it—what becomes of it?—It would remain, I presume, in the agent's possession.

1004. How could he do that if he had not got it? Where would this report No. 1 be?—Perhaps that would be in Palmerston.

1005. Would it not be returned?—I do not know if it was ever out of his possession.

1005A. We are told by Doris that he has sent in a report, and he was told to alter it: I want to trace report No. 1?—First diary is the field-book now at Palmerston office; No. 2 is the first copy of that field-book, said to have been altered—this may be in agent's possession; No. 3 is the second copy of that field-book, first copy being altered, and would have gone to Wellington.

1006. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Is the Committee to understand that when Quarterly took charge of Bell's poisoning he had full power, but could not employ any men?—He had full power—that is, over the gangers—and they were to employ as many men as Quarterly directed, and to lay down as much poison as he considered necessary—at least, these were the conditions, I understood.

1007. Is it likely that he spared Bell any expense in superintending as he did?—On the contrary, I think Mr. Bell objected to the cost.

1008. From that it would appear that Bell derived no benefit so far as expenses went?—No, he did not.

1009. *Mr. Dodson.*] I suppose it amounts to this : that on Mr. Bell going away he requested an officer of the department to see that the poisoning was properly carried out?—It took that form : he (Quarterly) was not to be in actual or working charge.

1010. *Mr. Duncan.*] Did you ever report that Doris had neglected his duty?—No ; but he carried out his duty in an irritating and harassing manner, which I think is very objectionable.

1011. Were you in charge when Doris was first employed by Quarterly?—No ; Quarterly was there shortly before I went to Otago.

1012. And you were not aware under what circumstances he was employed?—No ; only what I heard afterwards from Sub-Inspector Quarterly. I did not know two people on the south side of Waitaki when I went to Otago.

1013. *Mr. McKenzie.*] Are you aware that Mr. Bell himself charged Quarterly with neglect of duty?—This is the first I ever heard of it.

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