

have been taken against the owner on two or three different occasions, but without securing the desired end, technical objections being raised at every point. From latest reports greater activity is now being shown in dealing with the nuisance.

Wellington—West Coast.—The Manawatu Extermination Society continues to do good work, and the pest may now be said to be completely checked.

Marlborough—Nelson.—I had an opportunity of inspecting a large portion of the Marlborough and Nelson Provinces, and although the rabbits are very numerous on some properties, on others there is a very decided reduction. I made a special inspection of the country under the control of the Awatere Rabbit Board, the result of which has been a recommendation to abolish that Board. This is now being carried out.

South Canterbury.—During the early part of the year I inspected the line of the South Canterbury rabbit fence, from the Waitaki to the Tasman River, near Mount Cook. This I found in good repair. I was, however, much surprised to find a great many traces of rabbits along the whole line, on both sides of the fence, and, from reports, after careful inspection since made, I learn they are showing more or less all over the country to the northward. There are also evidences of a steady increase in the numbers on the Hunter Hills and river beds on the plains. To deal with this unexpected increase an almost entirely new staff has been placed in charge of the South Canterbury District with instructions to see that energetic measures are at once taken to cope with the evil.

Otago.—Owing to the department's powers to compel poisoning having been questioned last season some difficulty was experienced in the neighbourhood of rabbit factories in securing simultaneous work, many persons preferring to trap for the factories instead. Through this cause many more than the usual number of rabbits were left for breeding, and in consequence a large natural increase resulted. I am, however, given to understand that several of the factories will not be in operation this season, and therefore more united action may be looked for. Although this had a very serious effect in certain districts, in others, where simultaneous action was taken in poisoning, followed by other methods of destruction, good work has been done, and this is especially so in several places where a few years ago the pest was exceptionally bad. Stoats, weasels, and ferrets have become firmly established in the Wanaka and Hawea districts, and are doing good work. In Otago the general consensus of opinion regarding the pest is that there is a considerable change for the better.

A special inspection was made of the country from the head of the Hawea Lake through to the coast, *via* the Haast River. In the Landsborough and Clarke Rivers several bad patches of rabbits were found, and these are now being dealt with. From the nature of the country there does not seem to be much chance of their spreading.

Wire-netting.—As mentioned in my last report, a deputation of runholders from the Amuri waited upon the Government, urging the necessity for the erection of some rabbit-proof netting-fences in that district. This has now been accomplished by the continuation of the fence from near the Gorge Creek to the Boyle River and also $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles up the Waiau. Mr. Duncan Rutherford, the lessee of Glynn Wye, contributing towards the cost of about 14 miles of this fence. Although I consider these fences an effectual barrier to the spread of rabbits from the north, the Hurunui Rabbit Board has taken no steps to compel owners to destroy the rabbits south of these fences, and through this neglect some trouble may result. The Board has, however, now provided for the work being superintended by this department, and, with energetic measures, the evil may be remedied. From personal observations, I am strongly of opinion that the erection of netting-fences, on proper lines, is the main solution of the rabbit difficulty.

Natural Enemy.—Satisfactory accounts of the benefit derived from their presence is evidenced by the number of rabbits found dead—unmistakeably the work of the natural enemy. When on my rounds I heard of several nests of young stoats, weasels, and ferrets having been found, thus showing they are breeding freely. They are also to be seen in districts many miles from where they were liberated.

I beg to append reports of local Inspectors of Stock, Dairy Instructors, Australasian Stock Conference, and list of Departmental Publications, also Tables of general information.

I am, &c.,

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Secretary for Agriculture and Chief Inspector of Stock.