

few can afford the expense. The question of supplying netting to farmers under some easy terms of repayment is worthy of consideration when opportunity occurs. Destroying cover and burrows is also a material help. The natural enemy, when unmolested, is reported to be doing good work, especially in the high country in Otago. Its operations tend to drive the rabbits on to the lower country, where they are more easily dealt with. Farmers and landowners have now had a long experience of the various modes of rabbit-destruction, but there are many districts where the matter is sadly neglected. Even in districts where good work has been done and rabbits reduced to a minimum owners get a false sense of security and think the pest is under for good, and are apt to then neglect it, till they find it is again assuming large proportions, with the result that this neglect takes a long time to rectify. The alarming increase of the pest in all parts has, however, brought landowners to a sense of their position and to the seriousness of the trouble, and considerable agitation to take more effective measures and also the framing of amendments to the Rabbit Act have been the result. The new Act provides for heavier penalties in cases of neglect, and the powers of an Inspector are increased. This, it is certain, will not be abused, and will give the Inspector greater confidence in administering the Act. Most of the Inspectors are now experienced, and carry out their often unpleasant duties with zeal, tact, and discretion. The amendments to the Act also provide for the forming of rate-payers' Rabbit Boards over smaller areas, and this will probably prove beneficial.

In some parts local committees have been in existence for some time, and these have done excellently, this system tending to more simultaneous and constant work. The war has had a serious effect in the inspection and administration work carried on by the Department, as so many officers had been drawn into the ranks. No doubt this has had an indirect effect on the increase of rabbits, as in several districts a considerable time elapsed before vacancies could be filled.

The district of the Hawke's Bay Rabbit Board continues to be kept well under control and shows good results, and the efforts of the East Coast Rabbit Board have been well maintained. The powers of an Inspector under these Boards are not actually greater, but greater support is rendered him by the landowners generally and his superior officers and the members of the Boards.

Sales of phosphorized pollard, &c., from the departmental depots have greatly increased, proving that the articles turned out are of good quality. The amount of phosphorized pollard distributed from the different depots amounts to between 250 to 300 tons per annum. This is sold to customers at practically cost price to the depot. Some 5 tons of phosphorized oats and 432 lb. of phosphorized wheat were also manufactured for rabbit and bird poison. The buildings and plants for dealing with this work are quite inadequate and require immediate alteration and enlargement.

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

The difficulties attending the administration of the Noxious Weeds Act do not decrease, and it is becoming more and more apparent that the Act cannot be administered in its present form with an equal degree of severity in every district or against every individual. As it stands, much has to be left to the discretion of the Inspector, but this discretion is apt to be abused. In some districts so much discretion has been used that weeds seem to have got hopelessly out of control, simply because those administering the Act have not carried out their duties in a judicious manner even tempered with a certain amount of discretion. Inspectors are somewhat handicapped by the wording of the present Act, in that certain powers were taken from them when the words "to the satisfaction of the Inspector" were deleted. These should again be inserted. The decision is left to a Magistrate, but in most cases he is not in a position to judge except by weight of evidence, and there are always other and extenuating circumstances of which he is not aware and which an Inspector does not care to ventilate. The Noxious Weeds Act is an unpopular one on account of the opinion that coercion is implied and may be harshly used by an Inspector, but this seldom or never happens. Still, the Act was framed for the public good, and, although opponents may say otherwise, it has justified its place on the statutes and should remain there. If beneficial amendments can be made, by all means this should be done; but otherwise the Act, even in its present form, can be administered in such a manner as to show good results. Shortage of labour has for some seasons past doubtless been the cause of a partial standstill in the usefulness of the Act. Inspectors generally have been alive to this and the consequent difficulties under which landowners have been placed, and have not strictly pressed its requirements. It has often been suggested that the administration of the Act should be placed in the hands of local bodies, but it is very questionable if such is feasible or practicable. Members of these bodies are often so situated that it would probably press hardly on themselves, and they would therefore be disinclined to carry out the provisions of the Act against themselves. It is found that in cities, boroughs, and townships there is great trouble in having weeds attended to, and these are a constant menace to adjoining properties and districts. All classes of weeds are found growing in them, and they are equally a source of contamination as are country districts.

Some town and borough authorities have appointed their own inspectors. These officers stand in a different position to a departmental Inspector. They are confronted by many conflicting interests, which does not tend to efficient work. Instances are known where the departmental Inspector, who has still the supervision of the work, has had to approach these authorities and ask that their inspector show more zeal and activity.

From every point of view it will probably be found that the Act can be more judiciously handled, and with less fear of outside interference and prejudice, by a Government officer than by any other method. Lately a suggestion was put forward by a local body, which appeared to be a very good one, providing for the work being carried out by local committees. It seemed very workable, but there are flaws to be found in it. Weeds are not easily confined. There are so many means of distribution. Rabbits may be confined by wire netting, but not so weeds. This Act must be a penal one, leaving it to the administration to say whether it should be made strictly so or not. There are