

sales of poison, &c., by the Department to storekeepers and settlers: Phosphorized pollard, 179,010 lb.; phosphorized oats, 7,705 lb.; phosphorus, 471 lb.; strychnine, 1,667 oz.; carbon bisulphide, 4,094 lb. The quantities of material used on Crown lands, Native lands, and railway-lines were as follows: Phosphorized pollard, 6,032 lb.; phosphorized oats, 583 lb.; strychnine, 8 oz.; carbon bisulphide, 2,588 lb.; charcoal, 2,310 lb.; chemical, 1,237 lb.; coal for fumigating, 10½ sacks; cartridges, 550.

Christchurch.—Towards the end of winter (1920) there was a considerable reduction in the number of rabbits practically all over the district. However, to the disappointment of the Inspectors and myself, this was followed by one of the best breeding seasons for rabbits that has ever been known in Canterbury, and consequently by the end of summer they had increased considerably. To make matters worse, wet weather spoiled a considerable portion of the phosphorized-pollard poison laid in January and February, and this work had to be done over again. Notwithstanding these setbacks, I feel safe in stating that there is a reduction of the pest at the end of this year (31st March, 1921) as compared with the same time last year. However, rabbits have not yet been reduced to pre-war numbers in all the Inspectors' districts. More work for the reduction of rabbits has been carried out than has been done in any other recent year, principally on account of labour being more easily procurable. Phosphorized pollard, strychnine-and-carrots, toxa, dogging and shooting, fumigating, digging out, trapping, &c., have all been more or less resorted to as a means of destroying the pest. Phosphorized pollard is the poison principally used, but for some reason or other rabbits occasionally do not take it well; this has been particularly noticed on several of the runs in the Mackenzie country, with the result that time was lost and landowners had to resort, at considerable expense, to other means of destroying rabbits. More strychnine-and-carrots has been used than in previous years, and landowners are now becoming less afraid to make use of this method of poisoning. Toxa has been used with varying results. In some instances it was very successful, while in others the results were very disappointing. Fumigation has been made more use of in this district than in previous years. I am pleased to report that trapping has not been carried out to such an extent as was done the previous year. Settlers appear to be realizing the fact that traps are one of the last means to use in trying to get rid of the pest. They are also evidently realizing that simultaneous poisoning at suitable times and intervals is the best means of destroying rabbits, and the Inspectors have in general been successful in getting occupiers to poison simultaneously. Settlers, I am pleased to note, are also taking a greater interest in the reduction of the pest. This is evidenced by the fact that although rabbits in general have been reduced in the district during the past two years the matter is brought up at some of their meetings, showing that they are alive to the necessity of doing everything possible to destroy the pest. It is to be regretted, however, that a considerable number of settlers, after having had good results from poisoning, have to be prompted by the Inspectors to continue this good work. In some parts of the country the natural enemies of the rabbit are showing up, and it is wonderful the good work they can do. This was particularly noticed in a recent inspection of the back country of Amuri, where numbers of recently killed rabbits were seen, all showing evidence of having been killed by stoats or weasels. It is to be noted also that on this country there has been no trapping. The Inspectors in general have carried out their duties in an energetic and tactful manner. During the year 96,191 lb. of phosphorized pollard, 663 oz. of strychnine, and 378 lb. of phosphorus were sold from the Government depots in this district. The decrease in the output of phosphorized pollard is compensated for by the increased use that has been made of strychnine. Six prosecutions were carried out under the Rabbit Nuisance Act, the defendants being convicted and fined amounts ranging from £2 to £8, plus costs.

Wellington.—The work of rabbit-destruction has been vigorously carried on throughout the year, poisoning being the principal method of extermination advocated and used. The rabbit-infested portions of the district have this year been thoroughly poisoned, tons of pollard-poison being laid in districts where little or no work had been done for many years. The Moawhanga country in the Taihape inspection district is a case in point. Over 20 tons of poison from Departmental poison-depots, in addition to a quantity of locally made poison, has been laid on the lands in this locality, including the Kaimanawa Ranges. These lands had had little or no poisoning for the last ten years. In the Feilding and Marton districts, which have never been previously treated, large areas of country have this year been poisoned. It was unfortunate that the supply of poison ran short during the good poisoning months of the autumn, but this was unavoidable, and is not likely to occur again. I am glad to report that very little trapping has been done this season, as where poisoning and fumigating are the means of extermination adopted, and trapping left severely alone, a much better control of the pest is obtained and maintained. A substantial reduction in the pest has been made, and I hope this will not only be maintained but that a further reduction will be again shown next year.

Auckland.—Following a very favourable breeding season for rabbits, the climatic conditions during the autumn and winter of 1919–20 proved most unfavourable for poisoning, which made the fight against the pest during those seasons very arduous work indeed. The past spring and summer have again provided ideal conditions for the propagation of the pest, and the increase has been very heavy. Notwithstanding these unfavourable conditions with which both the Department's officers and settlers have had to contend during the past two years, steady and appreciable progress has been made against the pest in almost all parts of the province, in some localities being especially gratifying. The climatic conditions during the present autumn have been very favourable for poisoning, and excellent results have been obtained with phosphorized pollard since the general poisoning commenced in February. Unfortunately, however, the work has been very considerably retarded on account of the Frankton poison-depot being unable to cope with the demand for poison. This failure has prevented the simultaneous work by settlers in the different districts which is so essential to success, while in a number of localities it has been responsible for delaying the work altogether till the weather broke and the most favourable opportunity of the past two years had passed. Very gratifying results have attended the use of carbon bisulphide for fumigating burrows, and we have been strongly advocating this method of destruction during the past eighteen months. Settlers have now come to realize the value of this agent, with the result that a demand has set in for bisulphide with which we have so far been quite unable to cope. We have 9 tons on order, and no difficulty will be experienced in disposing of this quantity when it comes to hand. Organization among settlers for the purpose of fighting the rabbit pest has continued to improve, and the various Rabbit-destruction Committees and Rabbit Boards have been of great assistance to the departmental officers. Three legally constituted Rabbit Boards are now in operation and working satisfactorily—one at Peria, in the Matamata district; one at Maungakawa, in the Cambridge district; and one at Hairini, in the Te Awamutu district. The success which has attended the operations of the Hairini Board has been very pronounced. Following are the quantities of phosphorized pollard despatched from the Frankton depot (for use in the Auckland Province) during the periods of twelve months ending 31st March: 1918, 64,880 lb.; 1919, 124,559 lb.; 1920, 150,043 lb.; 1921, 133,800 lb. To the 1921 figures might be added 16,048 lb. of poison which had been ordered but not despatched on the 31st March. The total output from the depot for the three months, January to March, was 90,724 lb. There was also a further 28,048 lb. on order awaiting despatch. During the year this depot also sent out carbon bisulphide, 13,482 lb.; phosphorized oats, 1,234 lb.; and strychnine, 216 oz.

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

During the year some very good work has been done in the cutting and clearing of noxious weeds, particularly blackberry, regarding which a tightening-up in the administration of the Act, especially in districts where this weed had not got beyond control, has had a good effect. Californian thistle presents the greatest problem, and to meet the position as regards this weed, and also to provide the other measures required to make the Act at least to some extent more workable, an Amendment Bill was brought down last session of Parliament. This, however, failed to reach the Committee stage before the rising of Parliament, but will, I trust, be brought forward early in the coming session.