

The principal poisons used are strychnined carrots and phosphorized pollard and grain. The former has gained much in popularity here during the past two seasons and is now the principal poison for winter use. Only one prosecution was found necessary during the year by our Inspectors, and prosecutions instituted by Rabbit Boards' Inspectors have also largely decreased. Rabbits in Taranaki have been well controlled during the year, and it is hoped the newly constituted Whangamomona Board will effectually eradicate them.

In many portions of this district the natural enemy plays a large part in keeping the rabbits well in check, and in spite of all arguments to the contrary I consider the lifting of the protection on stoats, weasels, &c., should not be considered.

#### DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, AUCKLAND.

Notwithstanding the effort put forth, and work executed per medium of poison operations with phosphorized pollard and strychnine in the autumn of 1925, and the use of carbon bisulphide and other fumigants in the late winter of the same year, the recrudescence that is customary again appeared in 1926 with the advent of a spring that was delayed in its coming. It is pleasing, however, to be able to record that throughout the province as a whole this seasonal recrudescence was much less in degree than in the previous year.

Although there is a great deal of country by nature fitted, or by its state of undevelopment made suitable, *par excellence*, as a home and breeding location for the rabbit, whercon repressive measures are difficult and costly and result in partial achievement only of the aim in view when the amount of time and money expended and the labour involved is considered, yet, nevertheless, even in such country improvement is apparent—an improvement that is pronounced in all areas throughout the province, particularly so in many localities that previously carried a considerable rabbit population. Despite this further progressive reduction it must not be inferred that the rabbit is done with, for there are still localities where it is in existence in some number, such as partly drained swamp areas, river-flats, and warm broken and partly cleared bush-clad land, which affords plentiful cover. The infestation is now patchy only in many localities, and throughout large stretches of the poorer lands rabbits are sparsely scattered. In the northern peninsula, although reports indicate their presence, they are in no part numerous, and their destruction and limitation of spread have received the close attention and supervision of the departmental officers there.

The methods of control adopted, followed on the lines of the customary poisonings with phosphorized pollard and strychnine, and the use of fumigants, ferrets, and the spade in warren country, and dogs in the open. Territory in the administrative control of Rabbit Boards has been well dealt with during the year, and in the main most excellent work has resulted from the operations of these local authorities in the areas within their jurisdiction. The system of local-body administration has been further extended in the province during the year by the creation of additional Boards under Part III as well as Part IV of the Act.

The sales of phosphorized pollard from the Frankton Junction depot show a decrease for the year ended 31st March, 1926, of approximately 33 tons over the previous annual period. The following comparative figures represent the location of deliveries :—

	1925.	1926.
Used in Auckland Province .. .. .	49 tons	26 tons.
Despatched to Wellington District .. .. .	29 „	19 „

The carbon-bisulphide sales approximated 1,400 gallons.

Strychnine was used to a much greater extent than formerly during the late autumn, winter, and early spring months, and the increase in the use of this lethal agent, together with lesser infestation by reason of the progressive improvement in the condition of the country generally, has in marked degree affected the depot output of phosphorized pollard. At least this is the case in so far as sales of phosphorized materials for use in Auckland Province is concerned.

#### NOXIOUS WEEDS.

The administration of the Noxious Weeds Act constitutes one of the most difficult problems which the Department has to deal with. Conditions of settlement in New Zealand where large tracts of land of poor quality exist, occupied and unoccupied, all more or less weed-infested, create an extremely difficult proposition when it comes to dealing with the noxious weeds. Abandoned settlement land is also a source of considerable trouble. All that is possible is to require a reasonable amount of work to keep the weeds in check, but even this is beyond the earning-capacity of such land.

Blackberry, in addition to being the most prevalent of the weeds to deal with, is also the most difficult. Few districts are exempt from its ramifications, and the class of country on which it obtains a hold is such that control with our present knowledge seems next door to impossible. On improved lands considerable work has been carried out, but continued work is necessary to attain anything of a permanent improvement, as any slackness means the loss of former labour.

Ragwort is also a prominent weed, and during the past year it appeared to be more prevalent, no doubt due to favourable seasonal conditions. Much control work in regard to it was done, but it is admittedly difficult to do all that is required.

The work of Inspectors under the Act is by no means an enviable one, and they deserve the whole-hearted sympathetic co-operation of settlers in this respect. The Act requires amending in some directions, and the question of making provision for Noxious Weeds Boards is another matter requiring careful consideration. Certain recommendations in regard to these provisions arising out of a conference of the principal officers of the Division have been made.

#### SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION.

The inspection of shearers' accommodation under the Shearers' Accommodation Act, 1919, has been continued during the year, and a systematic inspection of all premises coming under the provisions of the Act is being accomplished. Where improvements are required the owners are requested to have them carried out, and little difficulty is experienced in this respect. Some sheds provide excellent accommodation, while some certainly give cause for complaint, but the latter are in the minority, and when the position has been fully surveyed cause for complaint should grow less. Regulations under the Act are being brought down by the Department of Labour, for whom the work of inspection is carried out by officers of this Department.