

laid down, based on the Department's own experience of handling skins, and this has resulted in a very marked improvement in the lines of skins handled, a fact which has been favourably commented on by buyers.

It is gratifying also to find that, in addition to the great economic benefit to the country which will result from the destruction of deer, the actual work of killing has been accompanied by commercial gain in the value of deer-skins.

It has been ascertained that during the four years 1931-34 approximately 35,000 skins, worth nearly £9,000, have been recovered through departmental parties and private hunters, and either exported or used in New Zealand in the manufacture of high-class leather goods.

The actual shooting has provided employment for a number of private commercial hunters, in addition to departmental employees, and employment has also been created by the tanning of the skins and the manufacture of goods from deer-skin leather.

New Zealand deer-skins enjoy a high reputation in the overseas deer-skin markets, with the result that a satisfactory demand exists. This plays an important part in bringing the deer-herds under control at a minimum of cost to the State.

Progress Report, 1931 to 1934, and Future Operations.

As the season just ended was the fourth during which active measures have been taken by the Department to deal with the deer menace, it may be of interest to review the progress so far made.

It is revealed by information of which the Department is in possession that during the past four years approximately one hundred thousand deer are known to have been killed, and no doubt a great many more must have been killed by persons and means unknown to the Department with the total removal of protection on the animals. If one hundred thousand deer were concentrated into one herd it would completely fill, allowing each beast just comfortable standing-room, a road a chain wide for a distance of approximately four miles. Again, estimating the carrying-capacity of a small sheep-station at, say, two thousand sheep, and considering that a deer eats as much as two sheep, it means that the deer killed were capable of consuming as much as the stock of one hundred sheep-stations. It is not suggested, however, that all these deer were inhabiting country capable of carrying sheep, but a large number were, and, in any case, they were eating something which was of value to the country either as sheep or cattle food, or in fulfilling the natural functions of native forest or alpine vegetation. Recognizing that these facts refer only to deer *killed*, it will be realized that by the addition of those remaining the effect of the total infestation is a problem of national importance. Even the foregoing, however, does not reveal the full potentialities of the position, as it is necessary to consider the effect of the natural increase which would have resulted from this one hundred thousand deer had they not been destroyed. It will be recognized, therefore, that the time was rapidly approaching when such numbers would have been compelled to feed entirely on what are now sheep-stations, and that the forests could not possibly have survived the depredations of the hordes which were so rapidly developing.

The Department has been endeavouring to account for the destruction of the largest number of deer with the finance available. It realizes, however, that even in the localities which have been covered it would have been desirable to have had an even more extensive clearing-up, but this was not possible owing to limited funds. With the exception of action taken in the Waikaremoana district some time ago, all the party operations have been in the South Island. It seems evident that as far as the South Island is concerned consideration should be given to a plan whereby the whole of the deer-infested areas can be dealt with on comprehensive lines under a scheme covering a number of years.

Concern is being expressed at the damage to bush by deer in the Tararua Ranges in the Wellington District. The Department has had reports from its own officers on the conditions in this locality, and it is proposed to give consideration to the question of having this area covered by a departmental party. During the last two years some 3,200 deer-skins have been handled at the Department's depot in Wellington, the majority of which have been from deer from the Wellington District, but, from the information available to the Department, party operations will have to be resorted to to meet the situation satisfactorily.

OPOSSUMS.

Open seasons for the taking or killing of these animals were observed during the year. Following the close season in 1932 the number of opossums taken (178,605) showed a very considerable increase over the 1931 figures (44,715).

NATURALIZATION.

During the year seventy-four certificates of naturalization were granted, and this includes one person who was previously naturalized in New Zealand and who took advantage of obtaining the more complete status of British nationality under the existing Act whereby British status is conferred both in and beyond the Dominion. Four widows who were British prior to marriage with aliens were readmitted to British nationality. The machinery of revocation was set in action in three cases. In one instance an inquiry was conducted by the Supreme Court, and as a result an order of revocation was made on the grounds that since the date of the grant of naturalization the person had been disaffected and disloyal to His Majesty. It was stated in the last report of the Department that a close watch was being kept on the problem of persons who declare their intention of residing in His Majesty's dominions and who after being naturalized and taking the Oath of Allegiance promptly leave New Zealand for foreign parts. Two certificates were revoked in such circumstances, where it was established that the persons affected had been long absent from New Zealand and had failed to maintain substantial connection with British territory. Other cases are under observation, but it is obviously not easy to obtain evidence from foreign countries to prove intention in respect of future residence of such persons.