

RABBIT NUISANCE.

On the whole the position as regards the rabbit pest can be considered as satisfactory, the Inspectors' reports showing that good work is being done in nearly all areas. The slight increase in rabbits that occurred in some localities in the spring and early summer was effectively dealt with by autumn operations.

The methods generally adopted for the riddance of the pest have been poisoning with strychnined carrots, oats, or jam, or as an alternative with phosphorized pollard poison, and in some cases fumigating and shooting, together with a certain amount of trapping.

Owing to the dry spell experienced during the spring months of 1937 conditions were most favourable for the breeding of rabbits, and in some of the recognized rabbit areas the pest was much in evidence by the summer. In these cases steps were taken to see that the pest was reduced and proper control maintained, with the result that where rabbits were numerous they are now reduced to a minimum. Constant supervision is necessary to see that the ubiquitous rodent is kept in check.

In districts where Rabbit Boards carry out the provisions of the Act organized and systematic work is the rule, and they have been remarkably successful in their operations. Departmental Inspectors attend the Board meetings and keep in close touch with the work of the Boards. The successful functioning of existing Boards is leading to the constitution of further Boards.

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

Noxious-weed-control work during the year was largely concentrated on ragwort in co-operation with County Councils, and with the assistance of subsidized labour from the Department of Labour. The scheme of operations and the sum of money granted permitted of much more extended work than has been possible in the past, and a considerable improvement in the position is generally reported as a result.

The method adopted was largely dusting with sodium chlorate or Atlacide, mixed with lime in the proportion of 1 in 19, and satisfactory results are reported.

The expenditure for the year under the item of £74,725 provided, including the cost of the subsidized labour, material, and transport, amounted to approximately £74,200.

Blackberry, Californian thistle, variegated thistle, sweet brier, and hemlock are weeds that give a considerable amount of trouble to farm lands, and, unfortunately, sweet brier is gaining an increased hold in certain parts of the South Island, and is proving a difficult weed to deal with in so far as effective means of destruction are concerned, and more investigational work in the direction of finding an effective and practical means of dealing with the large areas affected is necessary. Some work with flame-throwers followed up with spraying or dusting applications of sodium chlorate would appear to give some promise, and this and other means should be followed up. Hemlock has spread in parts of Canterbury, and owing to its poisonous properties will require energetic attention.

STAFF.

To the staff as a whole I desire to record my appreciation of their work throughout the year. Increasing demands are ever being put upon officers of the Division, and the readiness with which these have been met is commendable.