

Crown should be compelled to destroy, the same as freeholders, or it must allow people to occupy the land.

125. *Mr. Bastings.*] How about rating Crown lands?—I think that is a very serious thing to consider, the rating of Government land. We are the Government, and it would be only paying rates to destroy rabbits on our own land. It could be done, but I think it would be very bad policy if any other means could be devised.

126. You think the Crown has a liability in the matter?—No doubt, and the Natives.

127. *The Chairman.*] Should power be given to compel local bodies to put the Act in force?—Yes; if the counties do not put the Act in force the Government should.

128. *Mr. Bastings.*] You say, if the county does not enforce the Act, it should be possible to have a *mandamus* to compel them?—Yes.

129. *Hon. Mr. Menzies.*] Do you think it better that Government should put the Act in force where counties fail, or should the counties be compelled to enforce the law by the Supreme Court?—Either would do, I believe; but I do not know which would be best: the question is, which is cheapest. I think the Government could do it with the least expense, rather than the Supreme Court.

130. How has the carrying capacity of your district been affected by the rabbits?—I have not found myself much injured, because I abated the nuisance on my land. I think the capacity in other parts of the district had been seriously affected before any attempts were made to stop them. No doubt in some places the carrying capacity has been lessened one-half.

131. *The Chairman.*] Has the natural pasture been permanently injured by rabbits?—All my pasture is artificial, but I know in other places they have eaten the natural grass clean out, and even barked the blackthorn.

132. *Hon. Mr. Martin.*] How many acres have you cleared?—I have only about 500 acres of bush, the rest is in artificial grasses. Some of it is able to carry four or five sheep to the acre.

133. *Hon. Mr. G. R. Johnson.*] Is there much Native land in your district?—No, very little.

134. Can you suggest any way in which the Native land can be dealt with?—The Natives object to a rabbit rate, as they object to all rates. Natives would not clear their land of rabbits unless compelled by Act. Most of the good Native land is principally leased to white men, who, of course, are responsible for the rabbits on it.

135. Do the rabbits eat the English grass as well as the natural grass?—They prefer the English grass to the natural, but where they cannot get the English they eat into the roots of the native grasses, and, as native grasses do not seed so well as English grasses, the effect is more felt.

APPENDIX D.

Mr. W. C. BUCHANAN, of Tupurupuru, near Carterton, examined.

136. *The Chairman.*] What experience have you had of the rabbit pest?—I have had from seven to eight years' experience in the Wairarapa, of the pest, and am Chairman of a rabbit district.

137. What means have you employed for abating the pest?—Dogs, guns, and traps—the last to a very slight extent; and clearing—that has been the most effectual factor in my case, clearing off the cover to a large extent: it is not possible to clear all. Clearing a large percentage of the land, and the employment on the average of one good man, have been so far effectual in keeping down the pest, that the weekly average killing over 11,000 to 12,000 acres does not now exceed thirty to forty rabbits. At the same time I do not consider my land an average tract of country. I do not consider for a moment that one man would be enough for same acreage of some land.

138. What is the character of your country—clay?—A free limestone soil.

139. Not light sandy soil?—No.

140. *Hon. Mr. Peter.*] How many rabbits were there when you commenced operations?—I took the thing in time. I attribute much of the success in keeping them down to beginning early, and giving it close attention.

141. *Hon. Mr. G. R. Johnson.*] What neighbours have you?—On one side there is unoccupied dense bush land. On a second side I have a boundary which, as far as rabbits are concerned, is no boundary at all for at least six months of the year. On the third side the boundary is to a considerable extent Native land. On the fourth side I am bounded by land, on which rabbits are never allowed to increase to any extent.

142. *Hon. Mr. Martin.*] Do the Natives keep the rabbits off their land?—Only partially so. About four years ago I sent my man across the boundary with a good pack of dogs for a day's shooting to see what there was there. He killed over one hundred alongside the other boundary.

143. *The Chairman.*] Do you know anything of the use of phosphorus?—Nothing but what I have gathered from the statements of others. From what I have heard, poisoning, when properly conducted, in the winter months, is very successful. I have been on properties where poisoning has been very successful.

144. Do rabbits take the poison when feed is plentiful?—I can only give the experience of others, and the evidence on the point is very contradictory. In many cases there have been good results from poison when grass has been plentiful. In other cases the evidence is to the contrary.

145. *Hon. Mr. Menzies.*] What is the cause of the discrepancy?—I can only suggest that it is due to difference in the mixing of the poison, and in the ingredients, and the difference between wheat and oats. I think it possible that a difference in handling the poison might produce opposite effects. For instance, where it was mixed by people's hands the effect would possibly be different from when mixed with some implement—the rabbits might take it readily in the latter case. A gentleman will attend the Committee who will be able to give valuable information on the question of handling the poison.

146. *The Chairman.*] Have you tried ferrets?—The man I employ always carries a ferret; but I do not use them in any other way. I have no evidence on that point. I have heard that they have been successful with ferrets elsewhere.