

22. In summer they might require some inducement to take it?—My son's experience is that they will take it mixed or unmixed with sugar.

23. *Hon. Mr. Williamson.*] Do you find that the sheep eat the poisoned grain?—For our part we lay it outside the fence where there are no sheep; or, where there are sheep in an enclosure, we take them out. I think the danger would be reduced to a minimum if the grain, instead of being laid in little heaps, were scattered.

24. *Hon. Mr. Waterhouse.*] I see it stated that a great advantage has been derived from driving a plough-line along the earth?—I have heard of it, but I have not tried it.

25. *Hon. the Chairman.*] It is curious that if you turn up the soil rabbits will go to it: they will go to an upturned sod sooner than to parts not so upturned.

*Witness:* I would like to put it on record that I think wheat is preferable to oats, for where we put oats mixed with wheat we have generally found that the wheat is eaten and the oats left by the rabbits.

25. *Hon. Sir G. S. Whitmore.*] Has nobody tried rabbit-nets?—Yes, it has been tried, but it is a very slow process.

27. *Mr. Harper.*] Did not Mr. Bullen try it at one time?—I am not sure. Where rabbits are plentiful it might be effectual, but when scarce I do not think it is.

28. *Hon. Mr. Nurse.*] Do you think that the present Act is oppressive as allowing one person to recommend one thing and another another?—I suggest that one course of action should be taken by all the Inspectors, who, I think, should not have the power of insisting on rabbiters or traps being used.

29. They insist on other things as well, such as laying poison where you do not wish to lay it. You said that you did not know that sheep were poisoned by it?—I have.

30. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Complaint has been made of two sections of the Rabbit Act, the first of which is that, immediately on the service of such notice under it, if one or more owners did not do all such matters as in the opinion of the Inspectors might be necessary, do you think that ought to be operative?—Unless you have some stringent Act which will compel a man to exterminate rabbits, he will not do it, he will evade it.

31. Perhaps this is what you mean: That you believe in the Inspectors having large powers, but you did not think these powers should extend to insisting upon any particular method?—I think there should be some particular method that should be carried out by all Inspectors alike: there should be one uniform method of exterminating the rabbit-nuisance. I think this Committee, in getting all the information that can be had on this subject, will be able in their report to decide what will be the best method that should be adhered to by all Inspectors alike. At present, if one Inspector recommends one thing, another may insist upon the opposite.

32. Complaint has been made of the absolute power given to the Inspectors by sections 9 and 10. Do you think such powers should vest in the Inspectors, or in the Resident Magistrate, for instance?—In the Resident Magistrate.

33. What is your opinion?—I think it would be better to vest in the Resident Magistrate upon conviction, for some of these Sub-Inspectors are men of very little note. Some of them are men who do not care to do anything else so long as they can get a few shillings a day. They are not the persons to administer the law. I think it is best for the Resident Magistrate to decide in all such cases rather than the Sub-Inspector.

34. *Hon. Mr. Waterhouse.*] Sub-Inspectors are sometimes rabbiters themselves?—I believe so.

35. *Mr. Buchanan.*] In last year's report I find the remarks of the Inspector. He says that wild ferrets are numerous in Southland; and he has no opinion of the ferret as the natural enemy of the rabbit. What do you say?—I should say that he knew very little about it. I should be disposed to think that he was interested in some other method.

36. Generally, is it your opinion that poison, with the ferret, has been the most successful method of killing rabbits?—Yes; on Mr. Bullen's run, which adjoins mine, it has been found so; also on my run. It was said at one time that you could scarcely fire a gun off that you would not kill half a dozen rabbits. You may guess from that that they were pretty numerous. They have been almost all exterminated by poison and the ferret. Mr. Bullen uses no other means. He has one man whom he calls his rabbitier; but this man breeds the ferrets. He also shoots rabbits. I have men who have shot a good many, and killed them in every possible way, but I depend most on the poison and the ferrets. In many instances the small farmers will not kill rabbits except in winter, when the skins are worth 4d. or 5d. each. Consequently, they breed up in the summer as many as are killed in the winter.

37. Are complaints as to the destruction of fowls by ferrets numerous from small farmers?—I have not heard any.

38. Have you heard of any lambs being killed by ferrets?—I have neither known nor heard of them, if there were any. Mr. Bullen's overseer told me that he found ferrets where rabbits were scarce, following the plough and eating worms.

39. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Are there any unoccupied lands in your district, that is, lands not in use?—Yes. There are also some reserves about, where the Government Inspector takes the poison to.

40. Are they paid for killing or taking the necessary steps to kill rabbits?—Yes.

FRIDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER 1884

Mr. WALTER GIBSON, examined.

41. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Will you state your experience as to rabbits?—When I took possession of these runs, a block of country fourteen miles long by twelve miles wide was infested with rabbits.