

I at once started poisoning, and poisoned very successfully. I purchased all the ferrets I could get and turned them out. Since then I have been working with ferrets, and have been breeding a large number this year. The whole of that country has been cleared pretty well of rabbits. So long as we employed rabbiters the rabbits increased instead of diminishing, inasmuch as it seemed as if the rabbiters would kill the natural enemies of the rabbit—the ferrets, cats, and wekas.

42. This ground you spoke of, is it higher up or lower down the slope?—The rabbits do not do much damage in the high, snowy country; they are thicker in the lower ground. Men are employed in putting poison over the country.

43. When you get rid of rabbits from the lower grounds, do you find that you get fresh detachments of them from above?—We send ferrets out. They kill all the young ones, consequently the whole country is now practically free from them. On a small area of ground two miles and a half by one mile 4,000 skins were found in a day. That was the first time that ground was poisoned.

44. With regard to your neighbour, Mr. Bullen?—Mr. Bullen has been breeding ferrets for ten years. Whenever he sees a colony of rabbits he sends ferrets out.

45. Do you think the Rabbit Act is working fairly?—I do not think so in some parts of the colony. I have no knowledge of my own, but I am told that the Inspectors compel rabbiters to be put on. Doing so, I think, only increases the pest.

46. What would you suggest instead?—I should suggest that they should be compelled to lay poison, and the breeding of ferrets.

47. Is that the only remedy you would suggest to be adopted all over the colony?—We find that answer in the Kaikouras. The district was once almost ruined by rabbits. All the ground they infested was rendered perfectly barren. It was quite a desert owing to rabbits. It is now covered with grass.

48. You have a large number of ferrets?—I shall breed a thousand this year.

49. Have you any reason to suppose that they kill sheep or lambs?—I have never known them to kill sheep or lambs.

50. Would you be able to tell whether a sheep or lamb was killed by ferrets or not?—I should imagine so; you would see the remains.

51. Have you any reason to suspect that they do?—No. In some parts of the year, when the ferrets are hard up for food, they have been known to follow the plough, killing worms, and feeding on them.

52. Do you know anything about any other natural enemies of the rabbit. I have never seen them in New Zealand?—In the old country there are others very destructive to the rabbit. If introduced here they might turn out to be a nuisance.

53. Does that answer apply to ferrets?—The reply to that is that they have freed the country to a great extent of rabbits.

54. Can the supply be kept up; may they not become scarce?—The supply can be kept up by continually breeding them.

55. *Hon. Mr. Williamson.*] I was going to ask if the witness ever noticed that rabbits are given to one particular kind of soil, for you will see one part of a run very much more infested than another, which has very few rabbits on it?—The only ground they do not care about is swampy land. If they get any dry land in the country they infest the whole of it in preference.

56. I know a run in Marlborough where there were very few rabbits for ten or twelve years, and all at once they increased enormously. We have had them in our country, but they never increased so as to be a nuisance?—Unless the country is very wet they may commence to increase at any time.

57. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You say that Mr. Bullen has been turning out ferrets for ten years; have you any reason whatever to think that Mr. Bullen has suffered any damage from ferrets; do you know whether they kill lambs?—No; I never saw a ferret touch a lamb.

58. Do you think that if any damage has arisen in Mr. Bullen's case you would fail to hear of it?—I should be certain to have heard of it?

59. You said; in the case of cats, stoats, and weasels, they might be as troublesome, because not so easily to be got rid of, as the ferrets?—Yes; they might be a nuisance.

60. *Hon. Mr. Williamson.*] What do you think about wekas?—The ferrets will destroy all the wekas.

61. What else have you to say about ferrets; will they destroy game or birds?—All birds that build their nests on the ground—the lark or any other that builds on the ground—disappear.

62. *Mr. Harper.*] Could you tell whether a lamb had been attacked by a ferret and killed; whether there was any peculiar mark left: the ferret only sucks the blood?—We would take care to examine the lamb if we found it had any marks, and no doubt we could find the mark if it had been killed by a ferret.

Mr. H. INGLES, examined.

63. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have you many rabbits now?—No, very few. We have broken the neck of the nuisance, I believe. It is, however, a slight tax upon us still. We lay poison for them almost constantly.

64. Have you ferrets?—Yes.

65. Do they work effectually?—Yes; I know some blocks that have been cleared of rabbits. But I do not think the ferrets themselves would clear them. Ferrets come in very useful after the number of rabbits has become less.

66. That is, you poison first, and then you use the ferret?—Yes.

67. Do you find rabbiters of any use?—Quite the reverse.

68. Are ferrets caught in traps set for rabbits?—I believe so.

69. Are they wild ferrets?—Yes. It is a very ticklish question this of trapping, but I do not see why a man should not be allowed to trap in his own country if he likes.

70. Do you think it desirable that Inspectors should direct what course should be adopted?