

—Here, again, I do not think the department good enough. In different parts of the country it is directed that different things should be done. Mr. Bayly, in one place, is giving a chance of seeing what the ferret will do. In Otago the runholders are ordered to put on rabbiters. If Marlborough is allowed to adopt one method, I do not see why it should not be allowed in Otago.

71. Do you think it would be an advantage to put on rabbiters?—No.

72. Do you think it advisable that the Inspector should have power to say what should be done? Would it be better to have some specific method prescribed?—That would be a very difficult thing.

73. Do you think there is any objection to Sheep Inspectors being Rabbit Inspectors?—In places where sheep are clean the rabbits would be his chief work; in places which are not clean his work will be greater; but, in a country like ours, where the duties are entirely different, I think so.

74. Do you lay poison?—Yes.

75. Do you mix it with anything?—Yes; rhodium.

76. How long will poison retain its power?—It depends on the weather. With oats it will retain its power longer than with wheat.

77. Do ferrets attack lambs or sheep?—I have no reason to think so.

78. *Hon. Mr. Waterhouse.*] Do you think you would keep down rabbits if you were obliged to keep rabbiters?—Their object, of course, is to have lots of rabbits.

79. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Has the Rabbit Act worked well in your district?—The Rabbit Act has worked very well with us, chiefly because we have a very good man. We want only to have the reserve and Crown lands clean.

80. How is that; do the Government assist you?—Certainly. Along the sandhills and on reserves it is done by the Government.

81. Do not the rabbits go up the hill?—Yes, on some hills.

82. Is there a different soil? Is that the way you account for it?—I have known rabbits on a particular run greatly increase. On another they would scarcely go on it.

83. Have you ever heard of a disease among rabbits?—I have heard of it.

MONDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Mr. G. F. BULLEN, examined.

84. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Will you give us some account of your experience as regards rabbits in your district: you had a great number, had you not?—When I went there they were pretty well confined to the Swyncombe Run. There was a few in our country. In two or three years they began to spread rapidly. I put on rabbiters, but the rabbits did not decrease; on the contrary, they kept increasing. I put on more men. I saw that it was becoming a serious pest, and that there would be great difficulty in treating it if allowed to spread. There was a penalty against turning out ferrets at that time. I turned out the ferrets without consulting any one or letting any one know anything about it, and kept the matter quiet for some time. I soon saw that dealing with the rabbits by means of their natural enemies was the best cure. I found that the ferrets also increased rapidly in a wild state. I had previously a good many rabbiters. I soon found that the rabbiters were killing cats, wekas, and everything in fact that killed the rabbit. I caught them killing them. I tested them in every way, and I knew they were killing them in every way. I resolved to pay them off, and depend on ferrets. I sent home to England and bought some—600; that was the first shipment. All of them died. We started again with 700, and out of that number we succeeded in getting two ferrets and two weasels.

85. *Hon. R. Campbell.*] Out of the 1,300?—Out of the 1,300. Fortunately they were two very valuable ferrets, being a first cross between the pole-cat; therefore we got a hardy class of ferret. The ferret has done very well with us; in fact, they have annihilated the rabbits on 90,000 acres of country. We have no rabbits. We keep no rabbiters. We never poisoned that country. We depend entirely on the ferrets. Every year we try to breed about 200. I have been letting my friends have some. I am not going to breed so many this year. It is distinctly understood that no trapping should be put down. There is a small cockatoo settler in the neighbourhood. He keeps a lot of pigs, and there are a few rabbits there. He managed to pass the Inspector, who visited his place. These rabbits go on to the ground of the neighbouring farmers. The Inspector went to him and said, "You must kill these rabbits." Traps were put down, and in less than three weeks he caught seventeen ferrets. He told me what he was doing, and we told him that he must stop immediately. He also caught a mongoose. It was one that got away. We were very sorry that it so happened, for a mongoose costs a good bit of money.

86. What is your experience of mongoose?—I have no experience. I know they will kill rabbits. I also know that they are very active, and catch them in the open.

87. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] Is that the small mongoose?—It was from the Himalayas.

88. Did you get out many mongoose?—I succeeded in getting out nine or ten.

89. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Do they get away on the run?—Yes.

90. You began to use ferrets at an early date, so that you never had occasion to poison?—Not by phosphorus. I had been poisoning grain with strychnine, but I found by putting it down I was likely to kill the ferrets. I was afraid.

91. Ferrets only suck the blood of rabbits, is that so?—They eat rabbits as well.

92. Do you draw a conclusion from that that it is necessary not to poison?—No; that is to say, phosphorus could not hurt; but it will still be necessary to poison. Where rabbits are in large numbers the ferrets alone would not be able to keep their number down.

93. Do you think that the Act should provide that the Inspectors should direct one method of killing rabbits?—I think the Government should say that there should be only one way of poisoning, and that should be by phosphorus, and the natural enemies of the rabbit could do the rest. I should lay it down that the Inspector should have no chance of deviating.

94. *Mr. J. C. Buckland.*] Have you seen the rabbits at Lake District?—Yes.