

great loss of lambs to the rabbits themselves. I am unable to say. Great loss arises from being compelled to employ men and dogs at that time, however, and for long after.

205. Do you think that if the land were poisoned systematically in winter, there would be any necessity to do so in the summer?—I cannot say that with regard to every place.

206. Have you not found that by allowing them some period of rest they draw together, and are then more easily reduced?—Yes.

207. Do you not find that dogging and shooting them scatters them over again?—Yes, it does; and great harm is done in this way by the ignorance of Inspectors, who spoil the work by insisting on such localized colonies being scattered again over the country in the breeding season.

208. Will they take the poison readily in winter if they are scattered in summer?—No; it is a cardinal point to let them alone as much as possible before the poison is laid; and, here again the Inspectors often vexatiously spoil and ruin real work, which would otherwise be thoroughly effective.

209. *Mr. Walker.*] About what altitude is the place you speak of?—It is from 800 to 5,000 feet.

210. Are there rabbits all over the district?—More or less over all.

211. Do they use dogs over the rough country?—Yes; but there seems to be no regularity of system maintained by the Inspectors. I am speaking only of three or four Inspectors. Some of them have common sense enough when spoken to; but they cause us to do foolish things, destructive of any plan we may form to get rid of rabbits.

212. Part of the country is snowed-up in winter, is it not?—Yes; my experience is that the mountains are just as well let alone in the summer. Rabbits seem to congregate in special localities after the winter in order to breed, but not to scatter over the mountains unless harassed and dogged.

213. Do you know whether the winter is sufficient to kill rabbits?—Perhaps it is a help; I cannot say that I think so practically in my country.

214. Do they not emigrate from the country in masses?—My experience is, that after winter-poisoning on the mountains, it is a rare thing to come across rabbits at all, except in certain spots. These spots can, where necessary, be advantageously dealt with by ferrets. If they are dealt with by dogs and guns the result is stocking the mountains again. It is perfectly suicidal to do that, and the work itself is ruinous to the stock.

215. *Captain Russell.*] Is there any good to be effected by rabbit-proof fences?—I do not think so. There is an immense quantity of roads and reserves in Otago, and these must be left open. The rabbits are most severe on Government runs, which appear to be held under a very useless system of tenure—most of them for only two, three, or four years; and, under such circumstances, rabbit-proof fences are impossible.

216. Can they work much against fences when they are up?—You speak of rabbit-fences? We have no rabbit-proof fences, not to any extent. I have a few about my homesteads; they are perfectly effectual.

217. *Hon. the Chairman.*] I understood you to say that they would not take poison much in summer. We had a witness yesterday who thought that adding a little rhodium and sugar to make it sweet, would attract them?—I have tried both with but small success; that is not my opinion.

218. *Mr. Buchanan.*] May I ask the name of the Inspector who compelled the use of dogs and guns?—I will give you his name if you wish it; but I do not come here to make charges. I will answer the question if you wish.

219. My object is this: The administration of the Act is dependent to a large extent on the intelligence and character of the men employed. We have the reports of the Inspector before us: we have the opinions of the officers in his report. My object in asking the question is to compare the action of the particular officer referred to with the report he sends up?—The officer I am speaking of is, I expect, not mentioned in the report, because he is a subordinate, although his action has been sustained by his superior.

220. Is it possible that this officer may have acted under instructions from his superior?—There will be no advantage in giving the name of the officer here before yourselves; none that I can see. I do not wish to make a charge against any particular officer here. When I spoke of "Inspectors" I was simply referring to the tribe generally.

221. You do not wish to make any charge?—No, not here before the Committee. I have done so in the proper quarter.

222. *Hon. the Chairman.*] I gather from your evidence that the Act ought to be altered in respect to the mode of recovering penalties?—Yes, it ought, in my opinion, to be so changed that, in any Court case, the Magistrate and not the Inspector should be the judge, from the evidence, as to whether efficient means to get rid of rabbits had been taken or not. It should, like every other possible charge, be a matter of evidence whether the accused should be convicted or discharged. The way I put it was this: That the Inspector's opinion as to efficient means must be regarded by any Court as of great importance in relation to the facts. But what I was pointing out was that, no matter whether you have proved that you took efficient means, so long as there is the mere "opinion" of the Inspector before the Court, a conviction must follow, no matter what the evidence may be. That is a very great defect in the Act. I think it is a very great mistake of administration. It allows these men tremendous and absurd powers. It is not pretended even that, in the appointment of these men, such large powers are taken account of. Another material point is contained in answer to a question by the Hon. Captain Fraser. When once you are convicted, which there is no possibility of your avoiding, the conviction only increases the penalty next time. That is not a matter of discretion. Having been previously convicted the penalty must be increased.

223. Under the previous Act, were you aware of cases of this kind of evidence being given before the Magistrate where one, two, or more men were constantly employed, and, according to the