

manager told me that, while ferrets killed rabbits in large numbers, he never saw a ferret touch a lamb.

265. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You say that the rabbits would increase if you employed rabbiters and dogs?—Yes.

266. How do you reconcile that with this fact that in 1875 I started rabbiters, with dogs, to clear some 12,000 acres of country: the rabbiters and rabbits had a fair start. I have never used poison: I have never used ferrets, except a ferret on the man's back: I trapped only for a little while in winter, and that only in particular places. In the same range of country rabbits are so thick that I have never seen anything to beat it. Now, any one might ride over these 12,000 acres a whole day and not notice one?—I cannot understand it, except that your rabbitier must have been a very careful and conscientious man not to destroy their enemies. But, it makes a wonderful difference if you send out ten or twelve men. You had to do with one man only. You must have had a most trustworthy man. But, in employing rabbiters you often have to deal with persons whom you do not know, what they are, or who they are. I have five men employed as rabbiters. I agree with you that the men should be good men. I am simply stating the history of the past nine years with me. All I can say is, that you have been most fortunate.

267. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have you any other remark to make as to the working of this Act?—No; the only way that I know of getting rid of rabbits is by poison and ferrets—the poison first, the ferret after.

268. Do the rabbit Inspectors do their duty?—Yes, as far as I know.

269. *Mr. Dodson.*] Do you think that the Rabbit and Sheep Acts, if properly worked at the same time, would operate in cleaning the country?—Yes, if the Acts were properly worked, especially the Sheep Act. I have never found it oppressive; it is expensive, not oppressive.

270. What amount of money might you have expended under the Sheep Act?—My fencing alone has cost me £14,000.

THURSDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Mr. R. S. HAWKINS, examined.

271. *Hon. the Chairman.*] I think you have said that the Rabbit Act has not been carried out with sufficient energy in your district?—I think it is better now. Public opinion has helped a good deal. It has come to be more in favour of the working of the Rabbit Act. They begin to comprehend that the rabbit nuisance is a real evil, and that the successful coping with it is proved to be a public advantage. There was a good deal of jealousy of it at first.

272. Do you think that the Inspectors are the fit men to carry it out?—I cannot give a general opinion on this.

273. The Committee wish to find out how the department is really working: perhaps you are satisfied with the working of the department?—No; I would not say that I am. It is a very delicate thing for me to say whether an individual officer is fit or unfit for his duties. But I think the Government ought to exercise great care and discrimination in their appointments. Inspectors under the Rabbit Act should be men of good character, thoroughly reliable, capable, and trustworthy men, and free from all suspicion of improper influence.

274. Can you tell us whether the Inspectors in your district require the landholders to put on rabbiters with dogs and trapping?—Yes, they have required it up to a certain point. When I had first to deal with my run it was swarming with rabbits. It was one of the rabbit-nests of the whole country. During the first year I was not alive to the full extent of the evil. Next year Mr. Wallace Smith, a most capable officer, was appointed. He came to me, and said that he had come to the conclusion that my place was heavily infested with rabbits; that I must take measures to get rid of the rabbits. I said to him, "What do you want me to do?" He said, "I want you to lay ten tons of poisoned grain." I felt very much annoyed; but it was no use to be annoyed. I went thoroughly into the matter with him, and took his advice; it ended in my laying down seven tons of grain by two gangs of poisoners. In a short time there was not a rabbit to be seen. He said, after that, "You must keep on rabbiters." I did so; but I found then that all I had before done was without avail. The rabbits were coming on from neighbouring lands, and in two months the pest on one paddock was as bad as if I had never killed a rabbit.

275. You attributed to your neighbour that the rabbits came from his land: was not the Act enforced?—It was never enforced in one case. In another case a complaint was made to the Inspector. He did not answer my letter. I told him I should send the correspondence to the Government. I fenced according to agreement with neighbours. I have put up, partly with their help, partly alone, twelve miles of rabbit-proof fencing. I then engaged trappers from the South Island. I set to work by means of traps and dogs. Meantime, I bought, bred, and turned out ferrets. Then I found that the trappers were trapping the ferrets. I went to Kaikoura to see Mr. Bullen. When I came back from there I was perfectly satisfied with what I had seen in Kaikoura, and I paid off all the rabbiters. I am now breeding and turning out ferrets. I have turned out about one hundred in the last six weeks. I am satisfied with the work that the ferrets are doing now. I think they will keep down the rabbits.

276. Do the ferrets increase?—They increase rapidly in Wairarapa. I feel that they have got through a very extensive tract of country. The whole of the country from Te Ore Ore and the Wangaeahu, which is about two to three miles from Masterton, to my place, used to be swarming with rabbits. Any number of rabbiters could not have reduced the rabbits to the extent they are now reduced. About a year ago I remember a place near the Wangaeahu Bridge where, within ten chains of road, I have counted in the evening up to fifty rabbits running across. The other night, in going home late in the evening, and passing the same place, there was not a single rabbit to be seen. The last time I was up there I overtook a settler who told me that some traps had been put against rabbit holes under a paling fence, and three ferrets were caught the first night. I was riding, a short time ago, through a rough country; I think quite twenty miles from where any