

The chief reliance after the poisoning-season must be the natural enemy. The Sub-Inspectors are endeavouring to educate the farmers in the use of ferrets. During the past twelve months 5,537 ferrets have been bred and taken delivery of under Government contract at 7s. 6d. each, and 1,482 were purchased by the Government from private individuals at an average cost of 5s. 6d. each. Of these, about five thousand have been liberated, principally in the high country in Waitaki, Vincent, and Lake Counties, and the balance sold to runholders at half-price, either for immediate liberation or to be kept through the winter and turned out in the spring. Besides these, over four thousand ferrets have been bred and liberated by private breeders.

The beneficial effects of ferrets turned out in the cold and wet climate of Wallace during the last five years are sufficient guarantee of their usefulness if properly protected.

So few stoats and weasels have been liberated in the Otago District that I have no special information concerning them, except that they have been recently seen at Clydevale, Kawarau Falls, and Lake Wanaka.

The spreading of gorse and broom, both on freeholds and along mining reserves, &c., on river-banks, has become a very serious matter, and very strong measures will have to be resorted to for its extermination. Overgrown fences are also a great stronghold for rabbits. Bush-frontages and partial clearings are also another source of trouble.

In conclusion, I am so satisfied of the benefit accruing from ferrets that I would strongly recommend that authority be granted to enable me to arrange for a full supply during the ensuing two seasons. The employment of professional rabbiters, and trapping, should be discouraged in every possible way. I would also suggest that rabbit-proof wire-netting should be included in the list of legal fences.

I have, &c.,

ALFRED DOUGLASS, Inspector.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands (Stock Branch), Wellington.

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From Sub-Inspector W. MILLER, Oamaru.

(1.) Phosphorized grain, shooting, digging out, hand-working ferrets, and liberating ferrets, stoats, and weasels. (2.) Would strongly recommend that the breeding and turning-out of the natural enemy be continued. Power to stop trapping where the natural enemy exists should be given Inspectors; and persons found killing or capturing the natural enemy should be rigorously prosecuted. (3.) Very great progress has been made on the runs in the Upper Waitaki, and throughout the district generally. (4.) Two. (5.) £85 2s. (6.) Four reserves—8,300 acres waste Crown lands, 30,000 acres reserves all fit for grazing, and about 10,000 acres Crown lands. (7.) 80lb. (8.) Nil. (9.) 20lb. (10.) Four. (11.) Nil. (12.) Nil. (13.) Two. Robert Stewart and Marcus Gunn, both of Kurow district. (14.) Five (one Government). (15.) 1,363. Up to the present they are doing well. (16.) 2,022; also doing well. *General Remarks.*—Every possible means have been taken to cope with the rabbit-pest in the Waitaki District during the last twelve months. The country on the Canterbury boundary and the rabbit-infested islands in the Waitaki River have been thoroughly dealt with. Ferrets have been turned out this summer on all the large holdings in considerable numbers.

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From Sub-Inspector R. HULL, Palmerston South.

(1.) Phosphorized grain, trapping, dogging, shooting, fumigating, and flooding with water-races on low lands. (2.) That wire-netting as a legal fence be included in the Fencing Act. (3.) Cannot answer, as I have only been here since October last; but they have increased on the low lands during the breeding-season. (4.) Eleven. (5.) £98 10s. 10d. (6.) Eleven; comprising about three thousand three hundred acres, about two thousand fit for grazing. (7.), (8.), (9.) Nil. (10.) Seven. (11.) Six. (12.) One. (13.) Four. (14.) Three. (15.) Nil. (16.) About six hundred. Unsatisfactory on low lands; good on the high country.

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From Sub-Inspector R. CORBETT, Clyde.

(1.) Poisoning in the winter, shooting and trapping. (2.) That cats, stoats, weasels, and ferrets be turned out in large numbers, and that trained ferrets with nets be used instead of trapping. (3.) Very fair progress. Last winter's poisoning was very successful. (4.) Seven. (5.) £599 15s. (6.) Hunter country, 30,000 acres; Cromwell Commonage, 9,000 acres; Clyde Commonage, 5,700 acres; Hawea Hundreds, 12,000 acres; Black's Commonage, 1,500 acres; Run 459, Dingle, 8,500 acres; and possibly Run 433, Mount Iron, 7,000 acres. (7.) 25lb. (8.) 25lb. (9.) 50lb. (10.) Twelve. (11.) Ten. (12.) One, and one withdrawn. (13.) Leahy. (14.) Four. (15.) Six hundred in February and March. Not sufficient time to give results. (16.) Twelve hundred during February and March. Also too soon to give results: hear they are thriving. *General Remarks.*—Owners are now alive to the advantages of simultaneous poisoning. I am quite satisfied that the working of trained ferrets will be found more efficacious than trapping. A large and influential meeting, at which all the runs in the county were represented bar one, and at which there were also present a number of farmers, was held in Clyde in March, and the meeting was unanimous that poisoning and the natural enemy were the best means of dealing with the rabbit-pest.

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From Sub-Inspector W. A. SCAIFE, Outram.

(1.) Poisoning with phosphorized grain during winter, dogging, shooting, trapping, and ferreting. (2.) Inspector should have further power to compel owners to cut gorse fences and remove spreading gorse. (3.) Fair progress has been made: stock is in good condition, and feed nearly everywhere.