

896. Did he not serve you properly?—If you ask me to mention any particular instance, the probability is I could not give it; but altogether his action while employed as a Rabbit Agent gave me sufficient reasons for dispensing with his services.

897. Did he neglect his duty?—I would not say that, but I doubted his impartiality in carrying out his duties, and I also doubted his loyalty to the Sub-Inspector.

898. Is he not supposed to keep a diary which is sent to the Sub-Inspector?—Yes.

899. Then, could not the Sub-Inspector satisfy himself as to the man's loyalty?—Still he might cause endless trouble. The fact was I did not consider him a suitable officer to be employed.

900. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You are Inspector for Wairarapa?—Yes; for Wellington West Coast Sheep District.

901. Would you give this Committee the state of the country in that district in regard to the rabbits?—Yes. It would perhaps be better if I were to divide the district into two parts, taking North Wairarapa first. There has never been any attempt to introduce the natural enemy to any appreciable extent there.

902. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] What is the boundary of North Wairarapa?—Its southern boundary commences at the mouth of the Kaiwhata River, and then takes a generally north-western direction to the Tararuas, and follows this range to Hawke's Bay boundary.

903. Does it take in Greytown?—No. Greytown is in South Wairarapa. It appears that in North Wairarapa the people were made to work in keeping the rabbits down, and the consequence was that so long as they worked they were kept in check, but immediately the work was relaxed the rabbits increased again. Last autumn the rabbits were exceedingly numerous. I came to this district in October last, and before any action was taken it was considered expedient to leave it until it could be attacked properly by a systematic poisoning. This has been done most successfully, and in following it up I have instituted numerous prosecutions under the Rabbit Act. I now hope the rabbits will be kept in something like check until the natural enemy is introduced, and this is being done, under the provisions of the Act, by a Rabbit Board.

904. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Is that Board formed?—It is being formed.

905. In the South Wairarapa a great many rabbits have been destroyed by the clearing the country of scrub and the introduction of the natural enemy. To show the good effect that the introduction of the natural enemy has: I may state that the people were so satisfied that they abandoned introducing any more; now the rabbits are on the increase again, and several prosecutions have been instituted.

906. When do you say they have increased?—Throughout last autumn.

907. You consider poisoning and the introduction of the natural enemy are the best remedies?—I think poisoning, introduction of the natural enemy, and rabbit-proof fencing are the best remedies; but the three must go together.

908. Are you in favour of wire-net fencing?—Certainly, after seeing the good results of it.

909. Do you think it will absolutely stop rabbits?—It does in some instances, where it is properly attended to.

910. In your opinion it requires constant attention?—Yes. In regard to the wire-netted fencing I may refer to instances in the South Island where it was absolutely impossible to keep the rabbits down without it.

911. Where was this?—In Marlborough. I should like to mention Mr. Buller, of Kaikoura, who owns part of the Kaikoura Peninsula, where, year after year, 15,000 rabbits were taken. He fenced his land across from sea to sea, and since then he has had nothing to do beyond a man attending to the fence and sometimes destroying a young rabbit. I would also mention a place in the Awatere, in Marlborough, infested to such an extent, and the sheep so reduced, that there was no profit till wire-netted fence was erected. Two years later the manager reported an increase of wool by tons. This increase was quoted during the hearing of a lawsuit at Blenheim.

912. Do you know Mr. Coleman Phillips?—Yes.

913. Is his country free from rabbits?—About March he was killing fifty or sixty a month.

914. He is, I understand, a believer in the rabbit-disease?—Yes.

915. What is your opinion about it?—I have seen traces of the bladder-fluke from Wairarapa to Southland, but it does not seem to be of much effect.

916. *Mr. Lance.*] The same disease as is in the Wairarapa?—Yes, the same.

917. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your opinion about trapping?—I only wish it were possible to prohibit it altogether.

918. It destroys the natural enemy?—Yes.

919. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Which is the best, in your opinion—stoats, ferrets, or weasels?—I can scarcely tell, because, so far as stoats and weasels are concerned, they have mostly been turned out in the far-back country, and there has been little or no opportunity of judging how they have got along; but I should say the weasel and stoat are more desirable, because they are stronger than the ferret and not so liable to distemper.

920. Do you think, if you turned out the whole three before poisoning in a limited place they would practically diminish the rabbits?—It would depend greatly upon the nature of the place.

921. Can you get rid of the rabbits without poisoning?—No.

922. You mean to say you cannot keep them down without?—No; they must first be reduced by poison.

923. But can you poison everywhere?—I know of no country where it would be impossible to poison; but in the back country, on high, long, flat-topped ranges, as about Dunstan, snow may be 20ft. deep. There rabbits are destroyed almost as much by poisoning, and in spring their skeletons are seen about the crevices of the rocks.

924. *Mr. Lance.*] And at Malvern Hills?—Yes.

925. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Do you know of any instance where the natural enemies have done damage to lambs?—So far, none at all.