

say if open and exposed, but it would be good if kept in a shed, for instance. A manager of a station told me that he laid baits after six months, and they were more effective than if freshly made.

33. Is it the opinion of managers that it should be laid green?—Yes. It depends upon the weather. Of course, if there is much dry weather it will lose little of its virtue, but if the weather is wet it will absorb the moisture.

34. And yet they keep phosphorus in water, and it does not lose any of its strength?—A stick is different from a bit of pollard saturated with it.

35. No, but it is the action of the air on phosphorus that makes it dangerous—water would prevent that?—But it dissolves the bait in a day or so, and it will disappear.

36. Is it your opinion that the danger from rabbit-poison is not worth considering?—Not worth considering.

37. *Captain Blackburne.*] Can you suggest to the Commission any means of guarding against having to take such wool as you have been speaking about?—My idea is that speculators should handle the wool after it comes in, as it used to be done some years ago. It is only since wool has gone up so high that they have been so careless.

38. *Mr. Foster.* What methods would you suggest to compel them to examine it?—Make them give you a warranty that it has been thoroughly examined.

39. Give whom?—Whoever is constituted the authority—the Harbour Board or whoever may be in charge before it goes into the ships for Home.

40. What would you consider a thorough examination?—To have it handled and thoroughly classified. That is a fair-enough test to satisfy myself.

41. And if a speculator purchased a clip he would have to classify it?—But it depends upon who he buys it from: if from a man of some standing the seller will be prepared to warrant the wool.

42. But the warranty you propose should be also a warranty as to his standing?—Yes, in the case of the smaller men—that is where the trouble emanates from. Of course, in years gone by the prices were not so high. The standard of price is, say, 8d. per pound, and by the time the wool is delivered to the purchaser it has gone up to 10d. per pound, and those people who had accepted the small price would be inclined to make up the weight.

43. You practically mean that the higher the price the more he wants?—That is my experience.

44. In the case of the large sheds, of course, you know the troubles with the shearers?—Yes; they object to any damp sheep.

45. Have you any case within your knowledge of last season that could be traced to damp wool?—Only the one I have mentioned. Of course, as you know, merino wool is particularly deceptive. For instance, I know of a fleece that was the subject of argument as to whether it was wet or dry. It was as dry as could be, but a close muggy day with moisture in the atmosphere would make it seem quite damp. Shearers will swear it is wet, but it is really only the moisture in the grease.

46. *Captain Blackburne.*] Possibly you have seen statements that have been made about shearers shearing wet sheep. Is there anything in that?—My own experience of late years is that if there is anything wet at all they will not touch them, and therefore I maintain, in the case of the small men who usually shear their half-dozen sheep—they might send in their wool wet.

47. *The Chairman.*] This might occur in a district like Cheviot, where the neighbours go from one to the other and shear for each other—they would not perhaps be so particular?—No. More particularly the man who shears his own sheep—probably himself and his sons. Of course, my own theory is this—and it might be ridiculous, but still I maintain it—what I attribute the cause to be is through this fleece wool that is shipped under the conditions I named getting hot; that wool might be packed perfectly tight, and through the ship rolling and the bales working with the motion there is no doubt there will be a certain amount of friction, and that causes heat—

48. *The Chairman.*] Do you mean the bands or the bales themselves?—The rolling and the working of the bales would cause friction, and that makes a fine dust from the bales, and when there has become an enormous heat inside, I think that tends to cause ignition as quick as anything.

49. A large number of those fires we have had evidence of—not necessarily here—we found a great many of the fires were in the interior of the bales—right in the centre?—That is so; but I do not know if you have had experience of wet wool—the heat is something enormous. If you allow a bale of wool to heat and stand it in the middle of this room it will never take fire.

50. Have you seen wool on fire?—Yes, but in a shed. I had a shed burned down, and when it has fire to set it going it takes more to put it out than it does to start it.

51. It will burn?—Yes, it will.

52. It is only a question of the surroundings?—Yes. Give it a thorough start, and you could never imagine anything like it. I had a shed burned down, and there was a lot of greasy wool in it, and it burned rapidly enough.

53. *Captain Blackburne.*] Have you ever made any experiments?—We were practically making experiments every day. This line of theory I cannot hold with at all. I know I have shipped hundreds of bales of skins. The pelts are dry, and if you apply a lighted match to the pelt it will be more inflammable than wool.

54. *Mr. Foster.*] Do you consider a bale of skins to be more inflammable than wool?—Yes, I do.

55. Given the same temperature?—Yes.

56. *The Chairman.*] And if the pelt had attached to it any portions of fat, do you consider it would be more inflammable?—Take an ordinary pelt and dry it: if shipped in any sort of condition it will be safe enough. I remember a case of doubtful wool. There was a bale about