

test on the farm of Mr. J. F. Buchanan, Little River; mangold variety test on the farm of Mr. Karetai, Little River. Springs County—Lucerne test on Lincoln College farm. The lucerne tests on both farms have done well so far. The land on which the test is being carried out on Lincoln College farm is very shingly, but the growth is very promising. The mangold variety test has done satisfactorily, but the crop has not yet been harvested.

*Timaru Supervisorate.*

Experimental work in this district has been suspended for the time being. The division has had in view the institution of a special small experimental area on which to apply a series of experiments bearing upon problems of the down lands of Canterbury, but although a number of inspections were made a suitable area has not yet been acquired. The most important consideration in connection with such areas is satisfactory working arrangements, and these are very difficult to secure, especially in the present abnormal times.

*Invercargill Supervisorate.*

During the past year much energy was concentrated upon the Gore experimental area, with very satisfactory results. A comprehensive scheme of experiments was carried out. The total number of plots pegged off was 113, comprising pasture top-dressing, lime, manurial, cultivation, rotation, green fodder, and root variety tests. A field day was held at the area on the 26th January last, at which there were about seventy farmers present, and all appeared keenly interested in the work. The most marked results to the eye at that time were the effects of deep tillage and lime as against ordinary-depth tillage, this being much appreciated by all present. Arrangements are in progress for establishing a similar area in the Winton district.

THE FERTILIZERS ACT.

The number of registered vendors of fertilizers was 343. During the year twenty-one samples were taken for analysis, and one prosecution followed.

THE RABBIT NUISANCE.

The state of the rabbit nuisance cannot be said to have materially altered for the better. This is due to a variety of causes, the principal of these being trapping for export both of carcasses and skins, weather conditions, and shortage of labour. Where the rabbit is considered as a nuisance effort is made to reduce it, and effective control is maintained. Unfortunately, this state does not apply in all districts, and where trapping for export is in favour a very unsatisfactory position prevails. Where this is so, coercion by statute does not have the necessary and desired effect. Public opinion and vested interests really act against effective control. As has been the case in the past, exporters with their large gangs of professional rabbiters influence the situation, greatly to the cost of the producers of wool, beef, mutton, dairy-produce, and all cereals. It shows grave neglect to see landowners allowing acres of their crops to be destroyed by the pest without making an earnest endeavour to cope with them, and thereby conserve their own interests. Cases are known where large landowners entrust the work of rabbit-destruction on their properties to those who export. This cannot tend to effective reduction. In other cases proprietors of canning-works endeavour to get landowners to sign over the right of rabbiting their lands to them.

If landowners were studying their own interests and that of the Dominion generally they would not tolerate such a movement. It would appear that the only solution of this question is to absolutely stop export of either carcasses or skins. The opinion is generally held by all right-thinking people, and by some Magistrates, that if such were made worthless the rabbit-infested country would soon be producing its legitimate and full quota of wool, beef, mutton, and dairy-produce. Settlers would devote themselves then more at the right season of the year to coping with the pest. Many farmers put forward the excuse that they do not want rabbits, and that they never derive any profit from them, yet they fail to take proper steps to destroy or get rid of them.

It is contended that an Inspector should receive all the support he requires, and it is considered his hand should be further strengthened by amendment of the Act in the direction of a return to somewhat of its original form. In the majority of prosecutions the fines imposed are not severe enough. If the fines are heavy it has a great moral effect not only on the particular defendant, but on the owners in the whole surrounding district.

The scarcity-of-labour plea is still advanced by owners when asked to deal with the pest, but no satisfactory explanation is given why plenty of labour is available at once when the export season starts. Large tallies have been obtained this season, and consequently labour was easily obtainable, thus showing that where there is profit such an industry will be naturally fostered.

Reports show that in the districts under the administration of the Hawke's Bay Rabbit Board the pest is well under control, and the same applies to that under the East Coast Rabbit Board, and there is evidence that this satisfactory position will be maintained. The conditions for dealing with the matter are different in these districts from those where the Act is administered by the Department.

One cause of the decided increase of the pest in several districts this last season was owing to the inspectorates in those districts being rendered vacant by the calling-up for military service of the local Fields Inspectors, and the long delay in the appointment of others to fill their places. As some of the positions were filled by new and inexperienced men, a further lapse of time resulted before these became acquainted with their duties and district, and this added to the already unsatisfactory state of affairs. Settlers and owners seemed to take advantage of the lack of inspection, and rabbiting operations were at a standstill. Rabbits, like weeds, if neglected for one breeding season are extremely hard to cope with for a very considerable time after. This is an example of what would happen if there was not an Act to enforce the destruction and control of the pest.