

The difficulty of the administration of the Noxious Weeds Act in connection with the control of blackberry received our consideration. The extent to which this noxious weed was spreading throughout the Dominion is causing much concern to farmers, as in many places good land is being overrun by the weed, and in some cases farmers' land is being rendered unproductive thereby. The provision regarding the cutting of this weed contained in the Noxious Weeds Act, 1908, really rendered any attempt to compel the destruction of blackberry by legal enforcement absolutely nugatory. The following resolution was therefore passed and sent to you:—

“That the Board of Agriculture view with alarm the serious menace of the noxious weed blackberry spreading over much good land in New Zealand, and urge on the Government the necessity of bringing in an amendment to the present law compelling the eradication of blackberry on the better private land.”

SEEDS BILL.

A draft Bill to control the sale of seeds for agricultural and pastoral purposes was exhaustively considered by us.

It was finally agreed that Dr. Reakes should confer with his departmental officers, and bring the subject forward again, and we have good reason to hope that a Seeds Bill will find its place on the statute-book at an early date.

RABBIT NUISANCE.

In accordance with a resolution passed at the last Agricultural and Pastoral Conference Dr. Reakes proposed that amendments be made to the Rabbit Nuisance Act—(1) reducing the area from 200,000 to 25,000 acres for ratepayers' Rabbit Boards, and (2) increasing the limit of the rate from $\frac{3}{16}$ d. to 1d., the Government subsidy to be still calculated on a rate of $\frac{3}{16}$ d. It was further suggested (3) that provision should be made to allow of a Rabbit Board being constituted on the petition of twenty-five ratepayers, and (4) that section 15 of the Fencing Act should be repealed, making a rabbit-proof fence a legal fence without any restrictions.

We are pleased to note that in the Rabbit Nuisance Amendment Act of last session proposals (1), (2), and (3) were dealt with.

It was brought under our notice that experience of the working of Part III of the Rabbit Nuisance Act (relating to Rabbit Boards elected by ratepayers) had shown that the method under which contributions are levied from farmers whose land is included in the Rabbit Board area required alteration. After much discussion it was decided to recommend that a better and more equitable means of levying the contribution would be at a rate per acre, instead of on the rateable value paid by the farmer on his land, as at present.

Another point raised was in connection with rabbit-proof fences. It was pointed out that as the law at present stands a farmer may request his neighbour to pay half the cost of a rabbit-proof fence, but this cannot be enforced, as if the matter is brought before a Magistrate he cannot compel payment of half-cost of such a fence unless it is proved that it is going to benefit both parties. After much discussion it was therefore decided to recommend that the law be amended so that in any district which a Magistrate, after hearing evidence, may declare to be a “rabbit-infested district” any owner or occupier who wishes to erect a rabbit-proof fence to protect himself should be able to compel his neighbour to pay half the cost. Resolutions on both these points were accordingly sent you.

WOOL-PACK AND CORN-SACK SHIPMENTS.

We have throughout the year kept in close touch with the Union Steamship Company in the matter of the shipment of wool-packs and corn-sacks from Calcutta to prevent any shortage.

At our conference with the National Efficiency Board in September last you informed the meeting that the Government had taken steps to secure corn-sacks for the next year's crop, and that the sacks would be sold at a uniform price all over the Dominion. We understood from you that so far as 1918–19 requirements were concerned inquiries made by the Board of Trade showed that there appeared to be plenty of sacks in New Zealand.

IMPROVEMENT IN DAIRYING AND IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DAIRY HERDS.

This matter was discussed with Mr. Cuddie, Director of the Dairy Division, who stated that in place of addressing farmers on the subject experience had shown the Department that the best way of dealing with it was to visit farms and give owners instruction there in the handling of milk and cream. Mr. Cuddie further stated that he had reported very fully on the subject, and had urged the appointment of ten additional instructors in the butter- and cheese-making industries. It was proposed that these men should start at the factories and ascertain what suppliers were delivering an inferior article, and then explain to them what should be done to effect an improvement. Instruction should go before compulsion, but if necessary compulsion would have to be resorted to. Members approved of Mr. Cuddie's suggestion and agreed to support it.

EXPORTATION OF POTATOES.

In February last the Board discussed the question of embargo upon the export of potatoes, and expressed the opinion to you that it was not needed.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION OF YOUNG FARMERS—THE JOSIAH HOWARD REQUEST.

The matter of agricultural education at the different Government experimental farms was brought before the Board by Dr. Reakes. What was required was men combining high scientific and technical attainments with sound practical knowledge to undertake this work, and therefore