

DEER—NEW ZEALAND'S ENEMY NO. 1.

Natural Increase Exceeds Kills.

There is plenty of indisputable evidence that deer are New Zealand's Enemy No. 1. In some forests, especially the girdle of Mt. Egmont, wild goats are the main menace, but the districts threatened by hordes of deer are of much greater area.

The introduction of rabbits has proved a very costly blunder, but bad as the rabbit is as a destroyer it has to take second place to deer. Why? Well, the rabbit makes its habitat in country that is easily accessible. Experience has proved that strict enforcement of existing laws can keep this nuisance under control. A few years ago, when the prices of skins soared to high points, this animal was practically cleaned out of some thickly-infested parts of Otago and Southland.

It is not so easy to wage successful war on deer, which can take refuge in very rough country. They are like the plundering old-time barons of England who could retire to strong castles when pressed by their enemies.

Always the deer are bringing death nearer to forests, on which the welfare of large tracts of farming country is absolutely dependent. They are eating out the undergrowth and so preventing regeneration; they are also killing adult trees. They are spoiling the forest floor—changing it from a sponge, a natural regulator of water-flow, into a waste of rubble. When those forests cease



A clean sweep by deer in the Haurangi State Forest, on the eastern side of Wellington Province.