

of skins submitted by private commercial hunters is one which experience has shown to be readily attainable by men of average skill with reasonable care.

4. Deer must be so skinned and skins so trimmed that front shanks (leg-skins), all points, hind shanks lower than half-way down to hocks, and neck shanks higher than the throat-line, are not included. The neck-skins of heavy stags must be cut off not higher than half-way between the shoulder and the ears and in all cases the ends of neck-skins must be cut square. In trimming, any bullet-holes near edges must be cut through to avoid leaving any narrow portions between the holes and the edges. Skins not trimmed to requirements will be further trimmed before weighing and the cost of labour so involved deducted from the amount payable.

5. Bundles must be securely tied with light rope. Wire must not be used. *Skins must be treated with powdered naphthalene on hair side, after being dried, to keep away moth, etc.* The greatest care should be exercised to see that deer-skins are at no time dried or stored in sheds where old sheep or deer-skins, or pieces thereof, are stored or lying about, as these may be infested with moth or weevil, or both, and are therefore sources of danger to the deer-skins. Skins must be kept flat, folded along the backbone line as they come off the drying line, and bundles must contain as near as possible twenty skins each. Each bundle must show on the left-hand bottom corner of the address tag the name and address of the sender and the number of skins in the bundle.

6. Recent investigations in connection with tanned deer-skins have revealed the fact that one of the main points which detrimentally effect their value is that of damage to the "grain" surface (the outside) by rocks. As the maintenance of satisfactory markets can only be achieved by hunters doing all possible to eliminate all conditions that detract from the value of skins, it is imperative that rock-damage be obviated as much as possible. While it is realised that in some cases some such damage is unavoidable, much can be done during skinning to prevent further damage, and any seriously damaged skins must not be submitted.

Note.—With a view to further assisting persons desirous of shooting deer for commercial

purposes, the Department of Internal Affairs will supply .303 Mark VII military ammunition at 10s. 6d. per hundred rounds, freight payable by the purchaser. The purchase-price must accompany all orders for this ammunition, which may be obtained from the Conservator of Fish and Game, Rotorua, or the Custodian, Government Buildings, Wellington, Christchurch, Blenheim, Nelson, Hokitika, Dunedin, or Invercargill.

J. W. HEENAN, Under-Secretary,
Department of Internal Affairs.

Wellington, 11th June, 1937.

OPOSSUMS.

A number of Acclimatisation Societies have applied for a close season for opossums this year. The value of such skins is at present at a low ebb. Thus is the ground being prepared for another menace such as that of rabbits and deer. The presence of opossums in our forests can easily become another major disaster if the price of skins remains low.

One forester claims that these creatures confine their harmfulness to orchards and gardens. It is certainly difficult to follow the logic of such a declaration, nor do observations and reports uphold such a claim.

Apart from the damage done by the opossum themselves, grievous harm is done by trappers in the forests who are not restrained from heavily blazing well matured trees and slaying many saplings. Their traps, too, kill and maim numbers of kiwi and other birds.

Revenue, however, has been forthcoming from opossum skins in past years, and when this is the case its recipients are usually prepared to gloss over all the harmful assertions and take the risk of another grave menace being encouraged.

Future historians, no doubt, will be able to record another unheeded warning if skin values remain low, and the taxpayer will have to shoulder a further burden.