

with tails so short that it will not be necessary to cut them off. Here is an extract:

Young (1923) noted that crosses of fat-rumped sheep (with rudimentary tails) with long-tailed sheep (16-24 vertebrae) gave broad-tailed sheep (with the same number of vertebrae as the long-tailed). Adametz (1917) found the broad tail of the Karakul to be incompletely dominant in crosses with the Rambouillet and postulated two genes to explain the difference in tail form. The short-tailed condition would appear to be dominant over the medium tail length of the British breeds, according to limited data from Roberts and Crew (1925). Wilson (1940) has reported on a "no tail" breed developed from crossing Shropshires, Cheviots, and Hampshires with Siberian fat-rumped sheep. Adametz (1917) has studied the inheritance of the S-shaped tail of the Karakul. In crosses with the Rambouillet F1 generally had the curved tail at birth or developed it in later life. He postulated a single main gene and a modifier to explain the results. Serra (1948) found evidence of the presence of a main gene, but considers that more than one modifier is involved in crosses of the Karakul with Portuguese breeds.

Though the experiments there are largely negative, they are as positive as a lamb's first five minutes of experimental walking. It does walk, and in an hour or two runs, and I do not doubt that in ten, or twenty, or fifty years it is going to run without swinging a tail. That I have long believed. Now I am a believer with reasons for my faith.

FROM sheep to rabbits is not very far yet on most farms, but it is going to be farther next year. On April the first—a good day on which to embalm folly—it will become an offence to buy or sell a rabbit, or sell or attempt to sell a rabbit's skin. That will not prevent rabbits from burrowing and

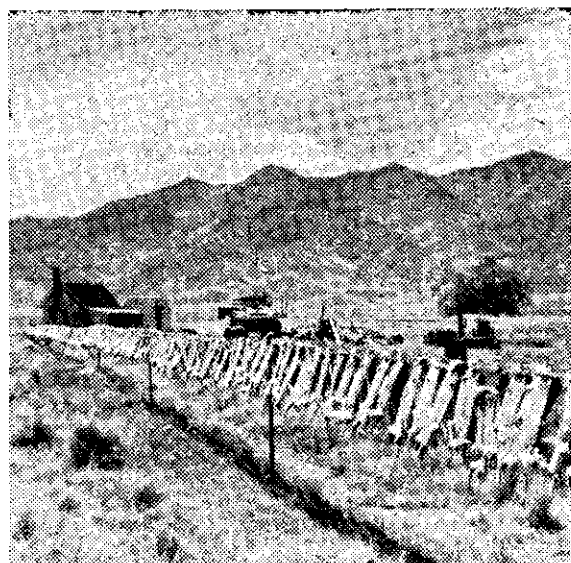
breeding, but it will make all men, and not merely most men, their mortal enemies. It will also, of course, make most of their present enemies more active enemies of small birds and poultry. The proof of the pudding is not only in the eating but the mixing, and if the process costs too much the eating loses some of its savour. So will it be with rabbits. If the price of their destruction includes such items as the disappearance of larks, a great reduction in finches and other low-nesting birds, constant attacks on chicken coops and perches—and, conceivably, danger to young lambs from the ground as well as from the air—there will be some, but not many, who will sigh for the bad old days. There will, however, be none who will sigh sensibly. Rabbits have brought nothing to New Zealand but work and long-range waste. They are fascinating in themselves—as beautiful as blowflies and as tempting as the totalisator; but their tracks lead everywhere to disappointment and loss.

However, I do not foresee a miracle on the first of April. I do not imagine that farmers will everywhere bestir themselves to stop a leak in their taps that in future will water no single blade of grass. If they could not persuade themselves to eradicate rabbits when these were costing them X-1 pounds every day, they will not suddenly wake up when the loss rises to X-0. But they will wake up sooner or later. Then the only problem remaining will be Mrs. Beeton's: catching the rabbits. Catching the first ninety will be simple enough, since it will involve no more than adding a penny or two, or a shilling or two, to our rates. It is the last ten that will put up our blood pressures, since we will be paying then

for what some of us will suppose is nothing—a rate on what looks like clean ground. That is where the test will come for us as well as for the rabbits, and I should like to be surer than I am that the rabbits will not win. Meanwhile, I wonder how many rabbits have died during the recent rain. In my own case I should think about a dozen in my estimated population of twenty. But winter is now over, and in spring the young buck's fancy turns to multiplication.

(To be continued)

"RABBITS have brought nothing to New Zealand but work and long-range waste"



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AA3

Drowning toll down —



but 87

still lost their lives last summer

Last summer, 87 people drowned. That's 19 fewer than the previous season. But it's still too many. Of those 87, thirty-five died in rivers, creeks and streams. Twenty were drowned off open beaches. Nine drowned in harbours, seven in lakes and lagoons, nine in boating accidents. Three died in pools and ponds, two in a sheep dip, one in an open drain.

Those are the depressing statistics behind the swimming, the fishing and the boating that New Zealanders love so well . . . that give us so much healthy pleasure.

**Don't take a chance*—
It might be your last**

★ Never swim alone, except between flags, on a patrolled beach.

★ Wear a lightweight life-jacket when you're surfcasting or netting.

★ If you can't swim, learn now. Next month might be too late.

★ When you're boating, run away from a storm: don't try to ride it out.

★ Ask about local danger spots and test for depth when you're fishing or swimming in fresh water.

★ Remember you're always further from shore than you think.



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