



RUN RABBIT RUN

A KORERO REPORT

GENERALLY RABBITS are well thought of and often loved. No one could doubt the popularity of White Rabbit, Brer Rabbit (smarter than Brer Fox), Walt Disney's Thumper, Peter Rabbit, or the dipsomaniac's imaginary (six feet one inch and a half long) rabbit, one of the main characters in the current New York stage success, *Harvey*. Rabbits in hutches are kept, fondly, by children. Rabbits (coupon free—fixed prices from 5½d. to 8½d. a lb.) stewed, roasted, stuffed, and in pies are eaten by adults and children.

In some hotels people have eaten roast chicken which never laid eggs, but which used once to have long floppy ears and a fast moving lollop; and doubtless some of the diners have been among those who wear the fifty imitation furs, ranging from mink to sable, which once kept rabbits warm.

But rabbits, like the New Deal, are not always popular. With Otago Central landholders, who have more opportunity of knowing them than any other section of New Zealand's population, they are most unpopular—wolves, they say, just could not be worse.

Rabbits were introduced into Otago Central about 1870 for the sport of shooting. They outlived, or outbred, their welcome in short time; they have been shot at ever since, but it has been machine-gun breeding against rifle-fire shooting—and the rabbits have had the sport. Luxuriant pasture land, first-class for stock, was nibbled as bare as dry bones, and corkscrewed full of holes. Rabbits and floods switched early pros-

perity into ruin for the runholders. Snares, traps, packs of dogs, and poison were used, but it was not until hundreds of miles of rabbit-proof fencing had been erected that there was any promise of control. Unfenced areas, however, remained a breeding-ground that menaced the land held by more enterprising farmers.

After the last war when the bottom dropped out of the rabbit-skin market, when there was no longer a demand for the tinned carcasses which had been exported in large quantities for several years, rabbiters would not pay for trapping rights, and land holders could not afford to employ them. Again the pest increased and became even more out of control. Gone were the days when in a hard winter rabbits would follow close behind the man laying the poison, snatching at the bait, when two or three men could earn more than

