

£1,000 for a season's work. Gradually Rabbit Boards were set up; landowners were rated, and with the money collected rabbiters were encouraged, poison was sold at bedrock price, regular inspections were made, and owners who let their properties become overrun were prosecuted.

More than 10,000,000 rabbit and hare skins (13,500,000 in 1941; value, £1,000,000) are exported each year from New Zealand, mostly to the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Last year, too, 1,750,000 frozen carcasses were sent overseas; this year the number is expected to be 3,000,000. Numbers of these skins and carcasses came from the rabbit freezing factory at Alexandra, Otago Central.

Skins which are stretched on wires take three or four days to dry. The factory has about 60,000 wires, and 35,000 skins can be dried at once in one shed. In a summer bale, skins number about 4,000 (rabbits are born in the spring, and about January, when trapping begins, are only medium size); in the winter only about 2,500 are needed to make up a bale. From the

higher prices paid for winter skins a levy is deducted to increase the return to rabbiters in summer for the skins of milky does and kittens (baby rabbits) which, ordinarily, have little commercial value—in this way rabbiters are encouraged to reduce the pest. Winter skins are of much higher quality, and the average price is more than 1s. a skin; some bring 2s. and more each; and at the last sales one lot of 100 skins brought £18 10s. Fur coats and furs of every type are made from these skins; and although a few years ago it was not difficult to pick the imitation from the genuine, to-day it can be done only by the most expert of experts.

The rabbitier, whose main difficulty is to pack the carcasses to the roadline to be picked up by trucks, has to gut and bleed the rabbits without bruising them while they are still warm, to avoid rejects. Horses can carry up to 100 rabbits, depending on the country and the horse; loaded trucks carry 3,000. At the factory heads are chopped off, the rabbits skinned, cleaned, washed, graded into three sizes, and packed.



*Heads and legs are chopped off and the carcasses skinned, cleaned, washed, and graded.*