Poison trails for rabbit destruction

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CORRECTLY-LAI'D trails play an important part in any rabbit-poisoning drive. The trails must be made in a proper manner (a rabbit cannot resist freshly-turned earth) and they must be located in the right places. Good trails may be responsible for up to 60 per cent. of the success of a poisoning operation.

A suitable trail should be as clean-cut as possible and about 1½in. to 2in. in depth. The disc-type poison distributor or a single-disc plough, will make an ideal furrow in most classes of soil. The furrow should not be continuous but should be broken every two or three chains by lifting the disc for about six feet and then lowering it again to continue the furrow.

This discourages the rabbits from using the furrow as a "race-track" and fouling the baits.

TYPES OF BAITS

The two most common forms of poison bait used here are phosphorised pollard, and oats or apples poisoned with strychnine. Arsenic is sometimes used with apples but the poisoning technique remains the same.

It is not generally realised that the type of bait used should influence the location of the trail.

When using phosphorised pollard, the bait is relatively inexpensive and is used in large quantities. The aim in this case is to "take the bait to the rabbits". Trails should be made all over the area on which the rabbits are known to feed or travel. Numerous trails should be laid to make sure that every rabbit will have an opportunity of picking up some of the baits. Trails should be laid around warrens and also in the bush wherever possible. Briefly, the aim should be to lay baits in every place where the rabbits are known to feed or harbour. By running many trails, the rabbits' natural timidity is overcome as they are compelled to cross...
some of the baited country and become accustomed to the furrows. (See Fig. 2.)

Poisoned Oats and Apples.—These baits are more costly than the phosphorised pollard and require more time and labour in preparation. It is customary to "free feed" with unpoisoned baits for a few nights in order to get the rabbits into the habit of seeking and eating the baits before lethal doses of poison are added. Because of these facts the trails are usually limited in extent and the aim in this case is to "bring the rabbits to the bait".

When "free feeding" with oats or apples, the aim is to draw the rabbit to the trails, mainly from areas such as rough bush country, rugged hills or bracken. This method is also best for treating small areas of rabbit-infested country.

The trails should always be made between the places where the rabbits are harbouring, such as warrens or bracken country and the
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places to which they travel for feed and water such as streams, dams and other water supplies, or paddocks containing crops on which the rabbits are feeding. (See Fig. 3.)

TIME TO LAY TRAILS

Trails are best laid towards the evening when the sun is well down and the baits are unlikely to become soiled by dust or dried out by heat. Rabbits usually move freely after sundown and it is advisable to have the baits fresh and attractive at this time.

Always be generous with baits, particularly when using phosphorised pollard.

When "free feeding" with oats or apples start with a generous quantity of baits on the first night and if necessary reduce the quantities of unpoisoned baits on the following nights to quantities which the rabbits will consume without leaving very many untouched baits. When laying the poisoned baits, after the rabbits have become accustomed to taking the unpoisoned oats or apples, reduce the quantities still further, in the case of oats using a teaspoonful instead of a dessertspoonful and placing the baits at shorter intervals.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. The trail is a very important point of your poison drive.
2. The better the trail, the more rabbits will be attracted to take the baits.
3. In using phosphorised pollard take the poisoned baits to the rabbits.
4. In “free feeding” with oats or apples bring the rabbits to the baits.
5. Lay your trails wherever possible so that they cut across the paths taken by the rabbits when travelling to and from feed and water.
6. Always be generous with the number of baits laid.
7. Always follow the instructions laid down in the departmental bulletins, when mixing and using baits. Leaflet No. 1051, “The Destruction of Rabbits”, is available free of charge on application to the Department of Agriculture, St. George’s Terrace, Perth.

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