

(No. 46.)



1897.

SESSION II.

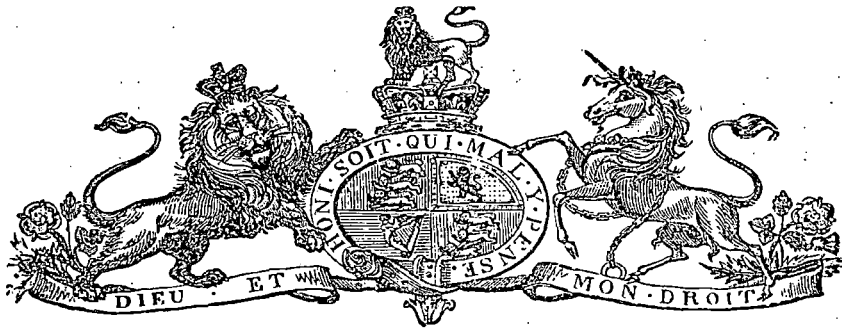
PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

THE STOCK DEPARTMENT:

Report by Chief Inspector on Working of "The Stock Act," "The Rabbits Destruction Act," and "The Codlin Moth Act," for the Year 1896-7.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

Cost of printing—£2 5s.



THE STOCK ACT, 1889.

REPORT BY CHIEF INSPECTOR.

Hobart, 1st July, 1897.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to furnish my annual Report on the working of the several Acts administered by this Department for the year ending 30th June, 1897.

"The Stock Act, 1889."

Stock of all descriptions have been found to be in a generally healthy condition, and but few complaints of losses by disease have been received by the Department, although, from the continued drought experienced throughout the country during the latter part of the summer and the consequent scarcity of feed, their condition is not all that could be desired.

Little has been heard of either lungworm or fluke in sheep during the past twelve months, and, notwithstanding it may be argued that the few past seasons have been unfavourable to the development of both these parasitic organisations, still there is every reason to believe, with the adoption of the preventives—such as drainage, burning-off, and fencing in all known infected areas—that have been from time to time recommended by those competent to advise, we shall have little trouble to fear from these sources in the future.

The horse bot-fly (*Æstrus equi*), which made its appearance here a few years since, was much more active during the summer months than has hitherto been known in this Colony. The fly has been found in many parts of the island, but appeared more prevalent on the North-West Coast and districts around Hobart. A leaflet on this subject by Dr. Wilmot, Hon. Veterinary Surgeon to the Government, has been circulated by the Council of Agriculture, giving instructions as to the measures to be adopted for prevention and curative treatment.

I have also to report a disease amongst horses having the appearance of what is commonly known on the continental colonies as "stringhalt." The true pathology of the disease is still questionable, the Australian veterinary faculty being very much at variance; but the predominant opinion would favour the helminthological theory of disease.

Owing to the ravages of the "cattle tick" in Queensland, a Proclamation was issued by the Governor in Council, under Section 3 of "The Diseased Animals Importation Prevention Act," on the 6th July, 1896, prohibiting the importation from that Colony, for a period of twelve months, of horses, cattle, and hides. It will be necessary to extend the period of operation of this Regulation.

Another Proclamation was issued by the Governor in Council, under the same Section of the same Act, on 3rd December, 1896, to prevent the introduction of "rinderpest" in horses, cattle, sheep, goats, dogs, pigs, or any other animal, or the carcass, skin or any part of any animal, or of any hay, straw, litter, manure, or fittings, from that part of Africa south of the fifth parallel of south latitude, or any other place beyond Tasmania, by vessels from such place which have called at any port in that portion of Africa for a period of two years.

The Interim Report of the Government Statistician, Mr. R. M. Johnston, is to hand, and shows the number of live stock in the Colony to be as follows:—

Live Stock.	1897.	1896.	Increase.	Decrease.
Horses.....	29,447	31,580	...	2133
Cattle	157,230	162,801	...	5571
Sheep	1,640,567	1,523,846	116,723	...
Pigs.....	55,261	70,142	...	14,881

The outlook for the approaching sales of Tasmanian stud sheep in the northern Colonies is not of a cheering nature, it being anticipated that the continued drought, and heavy losses of sheep in consequence, will seriously affect the prices realised. In anticipation of this the breeders here are shipping a smaller number than usual.

The following table shows the export trade in stud sheep to the adjoining Colonies since 1870 up to 30th June of the present year, with the Custom House value thereon:—

Year.	Number.	Value.	Year.	Number.	Value.	Year.	Number.	Value.
		£			£			£
1870.....	807	4115	1880	—	—	1889.....	4660	60,472
1871.....	998	4660	1881	1306	38,305	1890*	4748	65,110
1872.....	2433	15,500	1882	1937	34,012	1891.....	6581	74,892
1873.....	2586	15,547	1883	2913	62,275	1892.....	5398	37,774
1874.....	1997	20,895	1884	3244	60,758	1893.....	7262	52,464
1875.....	1673	23,414	1885	2825	51,325	1894.....	3985	24,229
1876.....	1403	18,157	1886	2207	32,689	1895.....	4384	21,034
1877.....	1303	10,103	1887	4005	54,337	1896.....	3208	21,172
1878.....	651	8485	1888	4140	56,045	1897.....	3949	27,046
1879.....	1496	47,259						

* Owing to delay in the sailing of the vessel, 2816 of these sheep, valued at £44,455, were not shipped until early in July.

"The Rabbits Destruction Act, 1889."

Rabbits are reported by Municipal Bodies as "scarce," and "not numerous," but the monthly returns to hand show the numbers destroyed to be very large, and although in a few places they may be less numerous, there is certainly no diminution of the pest, but, on the contrary, evidence is continually coming forward to show that they are spreading, and making their appearance in hitherto uninfested parts of the country.

The Westbury Municipal Council, after 3½ years experience as a Rabbit Board, find that under the present law rabbits will not be reduced, and desire an amendment of the Act, and at their meeting in April last passed a Resolution, "That, as it appears unless united action is carried on by landholders the pest will not be got rid of altogether, the Government be urged to amend the Act by making poisoning for rabbits compulsory, and action simultaneous."

This Resolution carries out what has been suggested for many years past, and such a measure would have my support. Sections 10 and 11 of the present Act provide for notices being served upon negligent occupiers, but do not provide for making poisoning compulsory, which in my opinion they should do.

A meeting of landholders was held at Green Ponds in April last, when it was decided to send a trial shipment of frozen rabbits to England, the gentlemen present undertaking to supply the necessary rabbits; this, however, they did not do, so no outcome resulted from this action, which is not to be regretted, as the rabbit question will not be satisfactorily dealt with in this manner. It has over and over again been pointed out by those competent to form an opinion that making rabbits a marketable commodity only tends to increase the rabbit plague by causing rabbit farming, viz.—only killing when and where they are numerous, thus leaving a sufficient number to propagate for future supply.

At the meeting of the Council of Agriculture held on 16th February it was resolved—"That the Government be asked to make provision that those landholders who require wire netting to protect their holdings from the rabbits may be enabled to purchase by payment extending over five years on the cost price of the netting with four per cent. per annum added."

This recommendation is under the consideration of the Government, and is on the lines adopted by the Government of Victoria.

The number and value of rabbit skins exported from the Colony during the past five years, as per Customs Returns, are as follows :—

	No.	Value.
		£
1892	3,180,104	17,097
1893	3,590,474	23,278
1894	3,541,464	16,194
1895	3,377,654	15,499
1896	3,716,126	17,182

“ The Codlin Moth Act, 1888.”

The effects of the ravages of the Codlin Moth were much more seriously felt last season than for many years past, the dry warm summer experienced greatly favouring the development of the pest in the various stages of its existence, and materially diminishing the apple harvest of the year.

It would appear from the observations of Inspectors and orchardists that the moth made its appearance earlier than usual, fruit having been found to be struck some weeks earlier than in other years.

In compliance with a petition received under Section 8 and following sections of the Act from orchardists in what was the Brighton and Richmond Fruit District, that district has been divided into four Fruit Districts; viz. :—The Municipalities of Richmond, Green Ponds, and Brighton, and the Road District of Colebrook. In the last-named the Act is administered by an Inspector under this Department, and in the others by Boards appointed in the manner prescribed by the Act.

In compliance with a similar petition, the Westbury and Deloraine Fruit District was divided, and now consists of the Westbury Fruit District and the Deloraine Fruit District, each under Board supervision.

The Customs Returns for 1896 show a total export of 598,474 bushels of apples, 142,041 bushels of which went to the United Kingdom, as against 565,160 for the year 1895, of which, 151,127 was sent to the United Kingdom. It will thus be seen that there is an increased export of 33,314, but a decrease in the quantity shipped to the United Kingdom of 9086 bushels.

The cablegrams to hand reporting the condition on arrival of the earlier shipments of fruit forwarded to the London market are only fairly satisfactory, and by later boats much frozen fruit is reported, showing conclusively that attention to the temperature of the holds has been neglected, causing considerable loss to shippers, and until the Mail Companies insist upon the strictest care and attention being devoted to even distribution of temperature the dissatisfaction that exists will continue, causing friction between the companies and the-exporters.

The “ black spot ” has not been so injurious to the fruit crop as in many previous seasons, and is confined to the low damp localities, in districts where there is a large rainfall, and to hilly situations where mists and light rains are frequent, and is found principally in the north-west, north-east, and south-western portions of the Island.

Some interesting experiments have been conducted with Bordeaux Mixture, with the view of eradicating “ black spot,” by a Huon orchardist (Mr. J. G. Shields), who expresses himself highly satisfied with the result. It is very desirable that further systematic experiments should be carried out with other spraying mixtures for the suppression of this fungoid growth. One of the greatest safeguards against it, however, is to keep orchards free from weeds, dead grass, and litter of all kinds where the spores are likely to be harboured.

The mussel or scale blight is giving orchardists much trouble, and causing considerable loss, not only in fruit, but also in injury to the trees affected. Its spread and increase in orchards already infected has been very rapid, and it is now becoming a menace to the fruit industry. Orchardists will require to pay much more attention to this pest in the future than they have done in the past.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

THOMAS A. TABART, *Chief Inspector.*

The Honourable the Chief Secretary.