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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

“THE RABBITS DESTRUCTION ACT, 1889”:

REPORT BY CHIEF INSPECTOR FOR YEAR ENDING
JUNE 30, 1895.

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

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“THE RABBITS DESTRUCTION ACT, 1889.”

REPORT BY CHIEF INSPECTOR.

Office of Inspector of Stock, Hobart, 30th June, 1895.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit my Annual Report under the Rabbits Destruction Act for the year ending 30th June, 1895.

Information gained from the monthly reports furnished by the officers working under most of the Municipal Councils leave me little to add to my previously expressed opinion, viz., that the present system will be found inadequate to deal with rabbits' destruction to such an extent that permanent good will result. In districts where the Act is supposed to have been well enforced by the Authorities the take of rabbits shows a small decrease as compared with corresponding months of 1894-5. The reduction of the pest in the winter months has in a great measure been brought about by the hard times, compelling the unemployed to work at this as a business to obtain a livelihood. By this agency many occupiers were relieved from the heavy expense of killing rabbits for which otherwise they would have had to pay; but the decrease has not been of a lasting character; the take of rabbits shows that perfunctory work only has been performed, and that the continuous killing during the summer months, which is indispensable, has been overlooked as one of the most essential and reliable measures that must be adopted to benefit the Colony. My contention is amply corroborated by the reports and admissions made by officers controlling the Act, that the suspension of killing during the shearing and harvesting operations counteracts previous attempts to reduce the pest.

Reports have also come to hand intimating that when skins are of increased value in winter that killing is carried on with greater vigour. This is to be regretted, for if the reduction of the pest is to be regulated by the commercial value of skins the rabbits will always be with the landowner, and be a continual expense, and further, will only be destroyed by rabbiters when other work is unobtainable.

I have lately made a personal inspection of a large tract of country, and my observations in two municipalities conclusively show that rabbits are still very numerous, and as an example may state that upon one property of 2000 acres 12,000 rabbits are reported to have been destroyed since the beginning of the present year and up to the end of June. My examination, in company with an Inspector, showed the pest to be still very numerous, and after three prosecutions have been instituted against the occupier. I have considered it to be my duty to urge the Warden to take advantage of the provisions of Section 12 of the Act, and compel compliance with the law. Such a case is most unfair to neighbours who do their duty, to have their properties again overrun with rabbits.

The Stock Department had similar difficulties to contend with, but with the difference that the Department failed to gain conviction in cases equally flagrant, and were consequently unable to take advantage of the provision of Section 12.

In another district visited, the Inspectors reported “rabbits very scarce.” Upon one property I found them quite the reverse, and have communicated the fact to the Warden.

In the Campbell Town District good work has been done, rabbits are scarce, and not distributed over the country as is the case through several districts. It is evident that the appointment of an Inspector whose sole duty is to supervise rabbits' destruction is infinitely better than police supervision, where other duties interfere with the carrying out of the Act. The undivided attention of the Inspector to this work is necessary. As an instance: through the courtesy of a Warden of a municipality a constable was instructed to accompany me to inspect land, but upon the appointed day his police duties necessitated his attending an inquest, a circumstance entirely beyond his control, and preventing him from accompanying me in the inspection,—an evidence that the two duties clash.

Occasional reference is made by constables themselves in reports that owing to other duties they had not the time to attend to the rabbits.

The Crown lands are now under the supervision of Municipalities, and as they have been reported by the Inspector to harbour rabbits, communications have been addressed to the Wardens informing them that certain sums of money have been approved by the Minister for the purpose of their destruction.

Another important difficulty is the division of properties by Municipal boundary lines, to which my attention has been drawn, and complaint made that in one district an occupier may be compelled to kill his rabbits, but if in the adjoining municipality the authorities are lax in their duty, and do not enforce the law, a great injustice is done.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

THOMAS A. TABART, *Chief Inspector.*

The Hon. the Chief Secretary.