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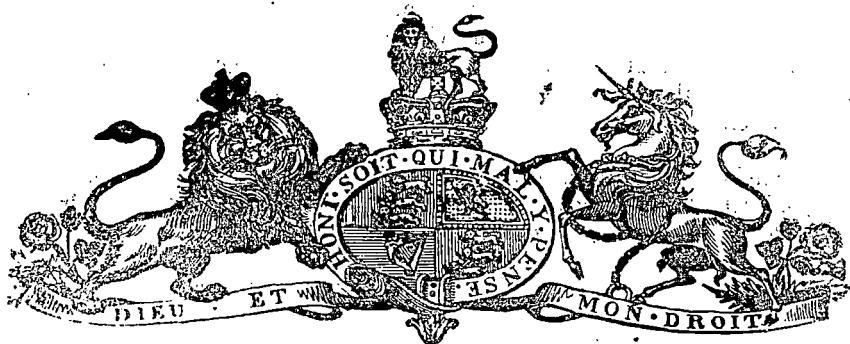
1884.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

THE RABBITS DESTRUCTION ACT:

REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR.

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



REPORT on the Working of "The Rabbits Destruction Act, 1882."

Office of Inspector of Sheep, Hobart, 30th June, 1884.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit the following Report of the working of "The Rabbits Destruction Act, 1882," for the year ending 30th June, 1884.

Since the date of my last Report the Municipality of Sorell and a portion of the Police District of Selby have been declared "Infested Districts" under the 4th Section of the Act. All the Rural Municipalities are now declared "Infested Districts."

Of the various methods adopted up to the present time for the destruction of rabbits, I find poisoned grain has proved the most effectual; and, with a view of enlarging operations in this direction, I caused to be issued during the month of January last upwards of 900 notices to landholders directing them to carry out Section 6 of the Act within two months. 900 similar notices, but without any limit as to time, were issued in April, and are still in force. Fully 90 per cent. of the landholders referred to approved of this action, and a large majority of them report a very considerable diminution of rabbits by this means.

For the next three or four months little benefit can accrue from the use of poison; but landholders should not relax in their efforts, but will have to rely on trapping, shooting, and hunting, and the use of bisulphide of carbon. Messrs. Webster and Son have lately imported, on my suggestion, a small quantity of bisulphide of carbon, which I hope shortly to have thoroughly tested under the supervision of my Inspectors. I am informed that it has been successfully used in the destruction of rabbits in the neighbouring Colonies, and I am sanguine it will prove efficacious here during the winter months, when rabbits stick so close to their burrows.

The Inspectors' monthly Returns to hand report a very marked diminution in the rabbits throughout most of their Districts as compared with last year, while in some few localities, I regret to say, they are still very numerous. It gives me satisfaction to report that, with but few exceptions, landholders have during the past year done their utmost to exterminate the rabbits. I feel bound, however, to add, that after exhausting every means to this desirable end, it will take some years of hard work to rid the country of this pest.

I am not unmindful of the unoccupied Crown lands. My Inspectors are employing men to lay poison on these lands where the rabbits appear in any numbers, and I am using every endeavour to induce the holders of Crown land to do the same, and this Department is recouping one moiety of the expense up to the amount of Crown rent.

The number of rabbit skins exported, as per Customs Returns, during 1883, was 1,735,856, valued at £20,367, being a decrease on the export of the previous year of 145,184.

I have very great difficulty in obtaining reliable information of the number of rabbits destroyed, as very few persons keep any account whatever of their work. For instance, out of the 900 persons served with the notices already referred to, only 180 have furnished Returns to this Department,—among those, however, will be found most of the largest landholders; their Returns in the aggregate account for 1,513,887 rabbits, the number of hands employed in the work being 652. I must further point out that the majority of these Returns only extend over the last six months.

Looking at the number of persons who are known to this Department to be carrying out the Rabbit Act and who have failed to give Returns, and giving due weight to the fact that most of the poisoned rabbits die and remain in their burrows, I am within bounds in estimating the number destroyed during the year at about four millions.

If it is the intention of the Government to amend the Act during the present Session of Parliament, I would most strongly urge that provision be made to strengthen my hands so that I may be in a position to compel the production of returns showing the number of men employed, the means adopted, and the number of rabbits destroyed in each month, and to furnish such information within a given time after notice.

I have been furnished with a Return from the Tasmanian Preserving Company at Glenorchy, showing that 140,133 rabbits were received at that establishment between the 3rd May and 29th instant, a period of less than two months.

Messrs. Webster and Son continue to supply poisoned grain and phosphorus to all persons requiring it; 800 lbs. of phosphorus and 260 bushels of poisoned grain having been disposed of within the last six months, also 8 phosphorisers.

In many districts much progress has been made in eradicating the gorse and briar, which afford so much shelter to the rabbits, patches of gorse to the extent in some instances of 70 acres having been rooted up and burnt within a very recent period. Much more, however, remains to be done in this direction, and doubtless will be when labour becomes more plentiful.

In conclusion, I beg to bear testimony to the zeal shown by my Inspectors in their endeavours to carry out the provisions of the Act; but I must again repeat that the most stringent measures will be necessary for some few years to rid the land of the rabbit pest.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. HARRISON, *Chief Inspector.*

The Hon. WILLIAM MOORE, Chief Secretary.