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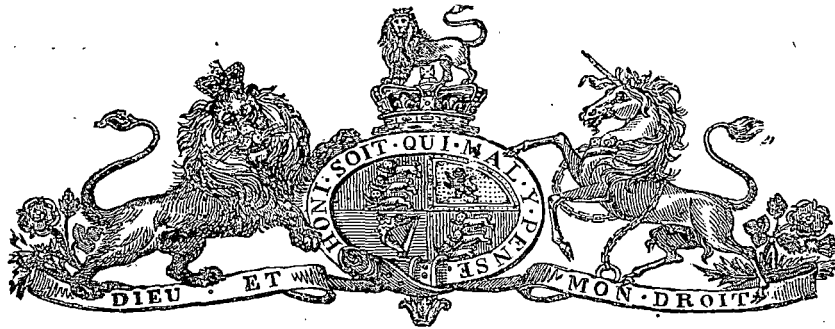
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RABBITS DESTRUCTION ACT:

REPORT BY CHIEF INSPECTOR.

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



## THE RABBITS DESTRUCTION ACT.

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### REPORT BY CHIEF INSPECTOR.

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*Office of Inspector of Stock, Hobart, 1st July, 1892.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to forward my Report upon the working of "The Rabbits Destruction Act, 1889," for the past year.

The Department has experienced considerable difficulty in the administration of the Act, consequent upon the lukewarm and perfunctory manner in which those mainly interested have attempted to comply with its provisions.

I desire seriously to urge upon you, as the Ministerial head of this Department, to ask the sanction of Parliament to amend "The Rabbits Destruction Act" in the direction indicated by the Members of the Select Committee appointed during last Session to enquire into the working and requirements of the Act, and to ascertain what advantages might be secured by amending the present law, so that its provisions could be carried out more effectually.

The Crown Lands have had the attention of Inspectors during the past year, and from their Reports appended it will be observed that these lands are not the breeding-places of the rabbits. Erroneous impressions are entertained that the rabbits from the Crown estate infest private holdings. This has been proved absolutely incorrect, although reports bearing this significance have been freely and industriously circulated.

The work performed upon private land has in a number of instances not been of a thorough nature, nor have owners evinced a desire to co-operate with the Department to reduce, and if possible exterminate a pest that is undermining the pastoral and agricultural interests. The antagonism exhibited to the Act is precisely similar to that shown towards "The Scab Act" on its initiation by the Hon. James Whyte (when the penal clauses were enforced), which proved such an advantage and boon to stockowners, who are now evidently forgetful that it is chiefly for their benefit that the law relating to rabbits' destruction is upon the Tasmanian Statutes with the object of enabling this Department to deal with the negligent owner and to protect those who fairly and well perform their duty.

The shortsightedness of some of the large landed proprietors will be evident from an examination of the District Inspectors' Reports appended, which show the occupiers the Department has been compelled to prosecute to enforce compliance with the law, and by so doing protect the small holder of land from being inundated with rabbits bred upon the holdings of large pastoralists.

This unpleasant feature of the rabbit question has always existed, and will be perpetuated unless the laws relating to fencing are amended in the direction suggested, to provide for equitable distribution of cost of erection and control of wire netting boundary fencing as a barrier to stop the inroad of the pest upon fairly clean land, which would also prevent negligent persons accusing their neighbours of breeding rabbits when in reality they themselves are the offenders.

From a perusal of the Reports referred to it will be seen by the number of prosecutions that have been instituted during the past twelve months that the Department has been obliged to resort to more rigorous action in carrying out the provisions of the Act.

One of the greatest difficulties to be fought against is the objectionable practice of allowing rabbits to breed for the profit of the professional trapper, who systematically preys upon the profitable industry of stock-raising.

This is carried on to a considerable extent in some Districts, and is a perfect curse,—in reality amounting to rabbit farming, especially where properties are situated adjacent to centres of population; and now that a Rabbit Preserving Company is established this abuse will annually increase. To strike at the root of this evil I strongly favour the poisoning clause recommended in former Reports and latterly by the Select Committee. This would be an effectual deterrent to the system of rabbit farming complained of, and would make the professional rabbit farming business profitless, and tend to greatly lessen the number of this rodent.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

THOMAS A. TABART, *Chief Inspector.*

*The Honorable the Chief Secretary.*

#### LAUNCESTON.

In reporting for the past twelve months on the working of the "Rabbits Destruction Act" in my District, I regret to say that results are anything but satisfactory. In many places the rabbits are as numerous as ever.

It is true some of the properties which were the worst infested some years back are comparatively clear now, but the area of infested land is increasing; and I fear that unless the Law is amended, making it compulsory to lay poison at stated times according to locality, and to destroy old brush and deadwood fences and keep gorse and briar within proper limits, and landholders substitute for professional trappers men paid by the year, the day is far distant when the rabbit pest will be reduced to harmless proportions.

*Prosecutions.*—Thos. Hall fined £10 and costs. Robert Viney, withdrawn, defendant paying costs, £5 5s.

M. FLETCHER, *Inspector.*

#### CAMPBELL TOWN.

I HAVE the honor to report on the working of the "Rabbits Destruction Act" in the Districts under my control for the past year.

No fresh methods of destruction have been adopted during the past twelve months,—trapping, shooting, hunting, digging out, fumigating, and poison being the usual means at different seasons; but I regret that advantage is not taken of favorable periods for the use of poisoned grain.

I am still of opinion that a "compulsory poisoning" clause should be inserted in the present Act, giving the Inspectors power to order poison to be laid in localities and at times to be fixed by the Inspectors, and with the approval of the Chief Inspector, not making it a general notice for a whole district, but merely on the worst infested runs, thus enabling an Inspector, by restricting the notice to lay poison to a smaller extent of country, to see that such notices were complied with in a proper way.

I have an instance on an estate in my District of what may be done by thoroughly poisoning with the "plough furrow system."

Some time ago, in a conversation with the manager, he agreed to give this method a fair trial. This he did, sending me notice of time of laying poison, and requesting me to inspect the runs and see the result.

I inspected these runs, and am perfectly satisfied that when the plough can be used it is by far the best method of poisoning.

On the second occasion, when laying down poison on this estate in the same way the result was even more satisfactory.

I may here mention that although I saw numbers of magpies on these runs I did not see one dead.

I feel convinced that if Inspectors had the power to order poison to be laid in this manner where practicable, that the result would be a marked decrease in the number of rabbits.

Although I have endeavoured to carry out the working of the Act with as little friction as possible with the owners and occupiers of land, as you are aware it has been impossible for me to do so without having been compelled at times to lay information; and it is most gratifying to know that the Magistrates in my Districts have invariably afforded me their support and assistance in carrying out the Act.

The following cases have been heard in my District for neglecting to comply with the provisions of the "Rabbit Act;" viz.:—George Finlay, fined £5; Mrs. C. Leake, fined £5; Mr. George Mercer, fined £5.

Occasionally you hear the remarks that the Act is not doing any good, and that rabbits are more numerous than ever. I venture to say that if any practical man, who a few years ago had a knowledge of the extent of the rabbit pest in the Ross and Campbell Town Districts, were to visit the same localities now he would unhesitatingly contradict such a statement, not only from the decrease in the number of rabbits to be seen, but also from the improvement in grass on the runs, and condition of stock generally.

CHARLES W. TABART, *Inspector*.

### NEW NORFOLK.

I HAVE the honor to furnish you with my Report upon the working of the "Rabbits Destruction Act" in the Districts of New Norfolk and Hamilton for the past year.

I am pleased to be able to inform you that there is a marked decrease of the pest in these Districts, landholders seeming more alive to the necessity of taking more active measures to destroy the rabbits: this, combined with the extra dry summer, the rabbits have taken the poison more freely.

The general methods of destruction adopted are the use of poisoned grain and trapping in a few instances. Fumigators have been successfully used, good work being done, especially in the breeding season. The distribution of poisoned grain with the plough furrow has been most effective. I can strongly recommend this as the most efficacious and least expensive means of laying poison, far better results being obtained than by the old method of chipping.

The erection of wire netting is, I am glad to say, coming more into favour, owners seeing the benefit and ultimate profit of its erection. This is mainly due to the practical proof given by Mr. J. W. Downie, at Glenelg, who has virtually cleared the rabbits on 2500 acres, with the result that in two years from the increased number of stock kept not only has the cost of netting and erection been repaid, but left a handsome surplus. This gentleman has enclosed another run, and still contemplates enclosing the whole of his property with netting. I hope shortly to be able to report a large area being enclosed by rabbit-proof fencing, as also some of the large estates being subdivided.

There is a large area of unoccupied Crown land in these Districts infested. These I have had poisoned, with good results. Altogether I have seven men employed at this work.

In conclusion, I can safely say that the working of the Act in these Districts has been attended with beneficial results. A "compulsory poisoning" clause is much needed to compel those occupiers who during the summer months only do sufficient to evade the law, preserving the rabbits for profitable trapping during the winter. In several cases I have proceeded against negligent landholders, and in all cases obtained convictions.

*Prosecutions*.—Ferrar Bros., fined £5 and costs; Mrs. Hookey, fined £5 and costs; Caleb Abel, fined £5 and costs; James Reid, fined £7 and costs.

CHAS. J. CHALMERS, *Inspector*.

### BRIGHTON.

I HAVE the honor to furnish you with my Report of the working of "The Rabbits Destruction Act" in the District under my charge for the twelve-months ending June 30th, 1892.

Speaking generally, I may say the results have been fairly satisfactory.

The principal means used to destroy the pest is trapping and shooting: phosphorus grain is occasionally used, and in all cases where it has been judiciously laid there is a marked decrease in rabbits.

I am confident that if landholders would unite in the use of poisoned grain more freely very favourable results would accrue, but I fear they do not yet realise the necessity of earnest practical compliance with the requirements of the Act.

I have had fourteen cases against landholders for failing to comply with the requirements of Section 11 of the "Rabbits Destruction Act," as follows:—

W. Broadribb, dismissed; A. Howlett, dismissed; J. R. D. Bethune, dismissed; H. Gage, fined £5 and costs; M. Nelson, fined £5 and costs; C. Mathews, dismissed; J. Hadden, jun., dismissed; J. Hadden, sen., fined £5 and costs; J. Hadden, sen., fined £5 and costs; A. Page, fined £5 and costs; F. J. Bowman, dismissed; H. Bisdee, dismissed; J. Hadden, fined £5 and costs; C. Swan, fined £5 and costs; making seven dismissals and seven convictions.

The Crown lands in my District are very rough, consequently not badly infested, and wherever I consider it necessary I have poisoned grains laid.

My District comprises about forty square miles of country, and I inspect on an average fifty-seven properties per month.

I would respectfully suggest that poisoning might with much advantage be made compulsory.

CHARLES GRUEBER, *Inspector.*

#### OATLANDS.

I HAVE the honor to furnish you with my Report upon the working of "The Rabbits Destruction Act" in the District under my charge during the past year.

I have made 260 inspections, the distance travelled being about 2600 miles; and the state of the District I am confident is reduced, although some of the breeding-places are still badly infested.

The general mode of destruction is trapping, but by far the most effectual is the use of phosphorised grain at certain times; so much so I am convinced that if its use is made compulsory and simultaneous at the discretion of Inspectors when it should be laid, it will be the means of reducing the pest to a minimum, as some of the largest estates in this District—viz., Kewstoke—is by far the least infested, which is due almost to the use of poisoned grain alone.

I had occasion in two instances to take proceedings under the Act, viz., against Mr. William Jones, of Ballochmyle, which was dismissed, and Mr. Samuel Page, of Northumbria, who was fined £5 and one guinea professional costs; and since the commencement of the present year against the Messrs. Pillinger, when Mr. J. R. Pillinger was fined £5 and costs remitted, and Messrs. William and Charles Burbury for not complying with a notice to destroy at Bow Hill, which was dismissed.

In connection with the Crown lands, I must say that the outcry of being the breeding-grounds of the pest is very much exaggerated, for it is a well-known fact that the pest is mostly to be found on the best lands, whereas the Crown estate now unoccupied in this District is almost worthless, and it is only on small portions where the pest is found, which I have had regularly poisoned with good results.

CHARLES GRIFFITH, *Inspector.*

#### EAST DEVONPORT.

I HAVE the honor to furnish you with my Report upon the working of "The Rabbits Destruction Act" in the District under my charge during the past year.

I have made 708 inspections; the distance travelled being about 3100 miles; and I may with confidence report a decrease of rabbits in a majority of instances, the exceptions for the most part being the few larger properties in the District where occupied by one person and used principally for grazing purposes.

The general and most effectual means adapted for destroying the rabbits is by hunting and shooting, their scattered condition rendering it difficult to deal with them in any other way, although trapping and poisoning have been carried out to a limited extent in a few cases with fairly good results.

I have kept a close watch on the Crown lands in my District, the greater part of which remains clean; but in every case where I have considered it necessary I have had poisoned grain laid, which has been readily taken by the rabbits, and I believe with very satisfactory results.

The general conditions prevailing in this District I consider favourable to the keeping down and ultimate extermination of the pest, from the fact that most of the holdings are comparatively small, while the population is considerable, and most of the country unsuitable for burrowing.

FRANCIS OLDAKER, *Inspector.*

## RICHMOND.

I HAVE the honor to furnish you with my Report upon the working of "The Rabbits Destruction Act" in the District under my charge during the past year.

I have made 687 inspections, the distance travelled being nearly 3000 miles, and I can with confidence report a decrease of rabbits in this District.

A few of the larger estates have not been so well killed out as the smaller ones, but even in their case the rabbits are nothing like so numerous as they were.

The general means adopted for destroying the rabbits have been trapping, shooting, and hunting, and in some few instances poisoning, which has been successful. These remarks apply to private properties.

With regard to Crown lands.—The Crown lands on an average are not infested with rabbits, but there is one part of the District, about 17,000 acres, lying between the White Kangaroo River and Coal River, where the rabbits were thick, I had seven men poisoning with good result; very few rabbits left to do any damage.

I also had three men occasionally laying poison on Crown land at Grass Tree Hill.

GEO. WILSON, *Inspector.*

## DELORAINÉ.

I HAVE the honor to furnish the following Report upon the working of "The Rabbits Destruction Act" during the year 1891-92.

In the Rabbit Districts of Delorainé and Westbury there are upwards of 500 infested properties, four-fifths of these being in the Delorainé District. There are, in addition, some 10,000 acres of Crown lands infested.

Referring firstly to these, phosphorised grain was laid wherever Crown land was known to be infested. In the locality of Mt. Magog a colony of rabbits was discovered that had not previously been disturbed.

The unoccupied areas extending along the River Mersey, through Dunorlan, Needles, Chudleigh, Mole Creek, and Circular Ponds, as far as Liéna, were thoroughly poisoned. At Liéna, where rabbits were known to cross the bridge, the spread of the pest has been effectually checked by the erection of the rabbit-proof gate in May last. Poisoned grain was also laid at Dalebrook, Western Tiers, Caveside, Reedy Marsh, and Cluan Tiers. Excellent results followed the work everywhere. The expenditure amounted to £136 4s. 5d.

As to private lands, trapping, hunting, and shooting are the methods generally adopted; but poisoning by phosphorised grain, where practicable, is found to be the most effectual.

Wire netting has been erected on several properties, rendering the owners independent of the pest.

Proceedings under Section 11 were instituted against—Mrs. Hughes, Dunorlan, resulting in penalty of £5 and costs; Mr. W. V. Field, Coiler's Rivulet, dismissed; Mr. Jas. Leonard, Cluan, penalty of £5 and costs; Mr. Joseph Hopkins, Silwood, dismissed; Mr. C. G. Hall, Retreat, penalty of £5, costs remitted; Mr. V. Newton, Westham, penalty of £5 and costs; Mr. Arthur Hart, Adelphi, penalty of £5 and costs.

The effect of enforcing the compulsory clauses has been to compel the more careless occupiers to comply with the Act, thus preventing any increase of rabbits excepting on a few properties on the outskirts of the infested country. To those new localities a certain number of rabbits are driven, and I fear this will continue until wire netting comes into more general use.

Regarding the future, I would say that an amended Act, embodying the suggestions contained in the Report of the Select Committee of 1891, is urgently required. It would be acceptable to the great majority of owners and occupiers.

R. W. M'GOWAN, *Inspector.*

## FINGAL.

I HAVE the honor to furnish my Report upon the working of "The Rabbits Destruction Act" for the Year 1891.

I regret to be unable to report a decrease of rabbits throughout the whole of my District. Most of the landholders have worked well to keep the pest down, while some one or two have just evaded the law.

In one stronghold only have I to report an increase; in this case I have laid three informations between June, 1891, and March, 1892, but did not get a conviction.

During the past year poisoning by phosphorised grain has become more universal, although in Fingal District there has been much opposition to it. I have endeavoured to persuade landholders to phosphorise their own grain in order to lay it fresh, and those who have done so find the poisoning the most effectual means of destruction. I regret to say that in many cases trapping is resorted to, although I have condemned it repeatedly, experience proving that it goes a good way to establish the pest.

From time to time I have inspected the Crown lands, but saw no necessity for any expenditure.

Three informations have been laid during 1891, resulting in one verdict of £5 against A. D. von Stieglitz, Esq., and one withdrawal against R. R. Reeves, Esq., both at Avoca, and one dismissal—T. H. Parker, Esq., at Fingal. The three informations referred to in second paragraph were against T. H. Parker, Esq.

I have tried to carry out my duties without resorting to the Police Office, but in the above cases found it absolutely necessary to do so; but so far I have gained but little from laying informations.

The distance travelled through the year was 3112 miles.

A. MORTYN, *Inspector*

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#### BOTHWELL.

I HAVE the honor to report on the working of the Rabbit Act, District of Bothwell, for the past year.

I beg to state that the decrease of rabbits is very satisfactory, and beyond my expectations. Poison has done good work; trapping, where constantly persevered with, has been satisfactory; burrows in some instances have been dug in, others fumigated with good results.

Wire netting has proved reproductive to those who have erected it; Messrs. Downie, Nicholas, Steel, Langdon, Jones, and others have expressed their satisfaction of same,—in fact, the enclosed land sas, Steel, itself, carrying a much larger per-centage of stock; it induces landholders to use more strenuous endeavours to eradicate the pest.

The unoccupied Crown lands are only slightly infested, and on all the lots where there are rabbits I have had poison laid with good results.

Six informations have been laid under "The Rabbits Destruction Act;" viz.—December 19th, 1891—W. M. Bisdee, fined £5 and costs; second information withdrawn. January 4th, 1892—H. F. Chamberlen, £5 and costs; Bisdee Bros., £5 and costs. April 30th, 1892—Bisdee Bros., plea of guilty, fined £5, costs remitted; information, H. Bisdee, Esq., withdrawn.

Several Justices of the Peace in this District have expressed an opinion that a Magistrate should be appointed to deal with informations under the Act.

WM. STONEHOUSE, *Inspector*.