

(No. 33.)



1883.

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T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

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**RABBITS DESTRUCTION ACT:**

REPORT OF INSPECTOR.

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Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,  
July 24, 1883.



*Office of Inspector of Sheep, Hobart, 17th July, 1883.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to forward my Report to 30th June.

I have thought it advisable to report separately under the "Scab Act" and "Rabbits Destruction Act."

I beg to draw your particular attention to the suggestions I have made at the end of my Report under the "Rabbits Destruction Act."

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. HARRISON, *Chief Inspector.*

*The Honorable WILLIAM MOORE, Chief Secretary.*

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

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*Office of Chief Inspector of Sheep, Hobart, 30th June, 1883.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit the following Report of the working of "The Rabbits Destruction Act, 1882," which came into force on 20th November last.

On receipt of your instructions to carry out the provisions of this Act, I lost no time in communicating with my Inspectors, directing them to make a thorough inspection, and report to me what districts it would be necessary to have declared "Infested Districts." Prompt attention having been paid to my instructions, I was enabled on 10th November to recommend that the following districts be declared "Infested Districts," viz., Hamilton, Bothwell, Oatlands, New Norfolk, Green Ponds, Richmond, Brighton, Campbell Town, Ross, Fingal, Glamorgan, Deloraine, Longford, Westbury, Evandale, and Port Sorell. These districts were accordingly so declared in the *Gazette* of 20th November.

Subsequently I found it necessary to add the districts of Clarence, Spring Bay, and Glenorchy to the list of "Infested Districts."

In consequence of the great area of land thus requiring constant supervision, it became at once apparent that three Inspectors could not carry out their duties under the Scab Act in addition to the arduous work here indicated.

Two additional Inspectors having been appointed on 20th November, the "infested districts" were allotted among my staff, and, I trust, the work will be found,—considering the limited period the Act has been in operation,—to be, so far, successfully carried out.

I have found poisoned grain to be the most efficacious means of destroying rabbits; and in this I am supported by each of the Inspectors.

With the three Raymond's Phosphorisers supplied to my predecessor, 200 bushels of grain were prepared for use. This was sold at cost price to 80 landholders in the months of January and February, after which time the machines were handed over, in accordance with your instructions, to Messrs. A. G. Webster & Son, who have since continued to supply poisoned grain, also phosphorus Messrs. Webster report sales amounting to 240 bushels of poisoned grain.

Many of the larger landholders throughout the Colony having procured machines and prepared their own poisoned grain, I have not failed to impress upon them the advisability of accommodating those of their neighbours whose requirements are limited, by selling to them at cost price phosphorised grain.

The four months prescribed by the Act within which occupiers were bound to take the necessary means for destruction of rabbits on their respective lands expired on 20th March for the districts first proclaimed; but, in consequence of shearing and harvesting operations absorbing for the most part that class of labour which would be otherwise available, I deemed it well to allow some extension of time before resorting to the compulsory clauses of the Act.

The Inspectors' Reports satisfy me that there exists a laudable desire on the part of the majority of occupiers of land to do all in their power to comply with the provisions of the Act; but I regret to say there are still a large number of rabbits in many localities. Notices have consequently been given under Section 8 to very many landholders which, I trust, will lead to renewed exertions on their part; I have, through the Inspectors, impressed on every person who may not pay due attention to this warning that I shall feel it my imperative duty to enforce the penal clauses of the Act against them.

I am using every means in my power to destroy the rabbits on Crown lands, but I experience great difficulty in finding trustworthy persons to do the work. In some cases the occupiers of adjoining properties have undertaken the task on my promise to reimburse them for the actual expenses incurred.

The number of rabbit skins exported in 1882 was 1,881,040, valued at £15,699.

It is quite impossible to arrive at an accurate estimate of rabbits destroyed, as so many of the landholders throughout the country keep no account of the rabbits they kill, and the Act does not empower me to insist on such information.

Returns I have received from the Inspectors, on the authority of reliable persons who have kept accounts of rabbits destroyed, otherwise than by poison, for the first six months of this year, show 2,058,491; the hands employed being stated to be 847. I am convinced that the number of rabbits here given is fully two millions under the full quantity thus destroyed.

I have been furnished by the Tasmanian Preserving Company at Glenorehy with weekly Returns showing that 174,120 rabbits were received at that establishment between 6th April and 30th June, preserved at a cost of £1178 0s. 7d.

In conclusion I would observe that, although a vast amount of good has already been accomplished by the working of the Act during the short time it has been in operation, nevertheless I beg most strongly to urge upon the Government the absolute necessity of vesting further powers in the Chief Inspector.

An amended Act should, I submit, contain powers to enable the Chief Inspector to compel the use of poisoned grain when and where he deems fit, simultaneous action in its use at certain periods of the year being essential. Also power to compel landholders to keep their gorse and other live fences within reasonable bounds, and to eradicate all other patches of gorse where rabbits are found to exist. I make this suggestion as in many Districts numerous gorse hedges are to be seen spreading to a width of 20 yards or more.

I have framed my estimates for 1884 on the basis of the present establishment, feeling convinced that the immense amount of work cannot be accomplished if the number of the staff be reduced, and that the Legislature will see the necessity of renewing the Act.

In recommending to the consideration of the Legislature the amendments of the Act as above, I take leave to add that, without the continuance of stringent measures, rabbits will become more numerous than ever, causing incalculable losses to the agricultural and pastoral interests of the Colony.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. HARRISON, *Chief Inspector.*

*The Honorable WILLIAM MOORE, Chief Secretary.*