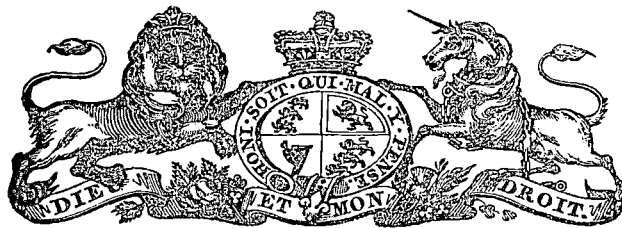


(No. 23.)



1872.

T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

SCAB IN SHEEP ACT.

INSPECTOR'S REPORT FOR 1871.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Wilson, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
June 25, 1872.



Office of Chief Inspector of Sheep, Hobart Town, 22nd June, 1872.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit for your information my Report upon the working of the "Scab Act" since the 1st November, 1871.

In the first place I may state generally that my predictions and anticipations of advantages which the eradication of Scab will confer on sheepowners individually and collectively, as well as the public at large, are being more rapidly realized than even many of the greatest supporters of the Act expected; and I have received ample testimony from some of its former opponents that they have discovered through their own experience how beneficial has been its operation up to the present time, how trifling have been the inconveniences, how imaginary the frightful evils and hardships they expected to flow from it have proved, how considerable are the profits they have already received from the improved condition of their flocks, and how much more these profits may be increased by the complete eradication of Scab.

To show you that I am in no way colouring the picture or drawing upon an imagination unduly excited by the large measure of success which has already attended my efforts in the cause of reform in sheep management in Tasmania, I will give some extracts from letters I have recently received from two sheepowners, both of whom were much opposed to the introduction of the "Scab Act," and gave it a strenuous opposition on the ground of their conscientious belief that it could not be worked, and would, in fact, prove highly injurious to sheepowners generally and ruinous to themselves individually. One of these gentlemen recorded his opinions in strong terms before a Committee of the House of Assembly in 1869. Now, with a rare candour which does him honour in sending in his return and contribution, he writes to me and states:—"I now say if you had brought the 'Scab Act' into operation twenty years ago it would have been a blessing to me and others." This gentleman holds 6000 sheep, most of them in what may be termed a difficult country. Another gentleman,—a larger holder in several districts embracing a wide variety of country and great diversity of climate, and whose opinions were as strongly adverse to the "Scab Act" as the gentleman from whose letter I have quoted, although they were not so prominently or publicly given expression to,—having felt the benefits conferred upon him by the Act, and having entirely changed his opinions upon the question, deemed it to be incumbent upon him to tell me so, which he did in the following terms:—

"I have to thank you for your valuable pamphlet containing the Scab Acts and much other useful information, which came to hand yesterday. I spent the evening in carefully reading its contents, and I take this opportunity of saying that I fully concur in all the statements you make therein. I think your remarks in reference to the breeding and culling of sheep; if properly carried out, would do more than you say. I speak from experience. My flocks gave me 3lbs. per sheep washed in warm water last year, but there was no loss from Scab. Had the flocks been in their usual state about 2½lbs. would have been the return. I hope next clip will be an improvement on the last, as the young stock coming forward are the produce of valuable rams worth from £5 to £10 each. I certainly expect at least 3½lbs. the ensuing season. I quite think with you in respect to shearing at the Lakes, and to show how correct your opinion is I enclose a sample of wool from some skins which came down from the Lakes on Monday last. I fancy it is cleaner than many clips washed in the lowlands.

"I was much gratified to observe in Tuesday's *Gazette* that you had extended the 18 months to the 1st November. I think this all that sheepowners can expect or desire. Perhaps in some remote districts you may deem it prudent to give a little more time."

The difference in weight of wool referred to by this gentleman would be represented by 8000lbs., which, being a good clip and hot-water washed, cannot this season be valued at less than 2s. per lb.; or £800 sterling.

It is most gratifying to me to receive such unmistakeable evidence of success from gentlemen who deemed me a visionary, if not something else with an uglier name. I refer to these changed

opinions in this Report in no boastful or self-glorifying spirit, but simply as matters of fact connected with the working of an important public measure which I deem it the duty of the Chief Inspector to place the Government in full possession of.

Last Session of Parliament an Act amending the "Scab Act, 1870," was passed, containing many improvements upon the original Act, and up to the present time it has worked satisfactorily. Experience, however, has demonstrated that it is still not quite perfect; and it is a question for consideration if it may or may not be advisable to make some slight alterations and additions during the ensuing Session, to provide for cases of a rather important nature which were either overlooked when the Act was amended last year, or were considered of a character so unlikely to arise that it was not thought necessary to make special provision for them.

By the Act of last Session the probationary period of 18 months in the "Scab Act, 1870," was extended to the 1st day of May, 1872. It also empowered the Governor in Council to further extend that period to any subsequent date not later than the 1st day of March, 1873, if recommended by the Chief Inspector.

When the month of April arrived I was called upon by this provision of the Act to decide if any further or no further extension should take place. Before arriving at a decision on this very important point it appeared to me that two or three questions were involved requiring careful consideration; viz.—

1st. Had the flocks generally attained that degree of freedom from disease that we might, without much public inconvenience, close the public highways to all sheep but those absolutely clean within the meaning of the 1st Section of the Scab Act Amendment Act, No. 2?

2nd. If an extension of time took place, would it be a hardship or would it cause material inconvenience or injury to those who had cleaned their sheep and had obtained clean certificates, such as, under the circumstances, they might with reason and justice complain of? and

3rd. If those who had or would be in a position to have clean certificates on the 1st of May might with any show of reason complain that they were not placed in such an advantageous position under the Act as they anticipated, inasmuch as an extension of time to Licence holders without payment would deprive the "Scab Act Fund" of the amount which would be derived from renewals of Licences on the 1st of May, under Section 17 of the "Scab Act, 1870;" and, as regards the contribution to the "Scab Act Fund," would leave owners of clean sheep in the same position as the owners of flocks with some disease still in them, or otherwise infected within the meaning of the Scab Act, and consequently ineligible for a clean certificate?

Naturally enough, I took occasion as opportunities presented themselves to ascertain individual opinions of sheepowners in different localities, and I found that they were pretty equally balanced.

The sheepowner whose flock or flocks could not be pronounced to be absolutely clean, although he thought they would prove so, and those who knew their sheep were still infected, as a matter of course desired an extension of time. Some owners of clean sheep were desirous that no further extension of time should be given; while others again, although they did not require it for themselves, admitted that they did not think they would suffer any injury if a moderate extension was given, and the law, as then in operation, strictly carried out.

To arrive at a decision on such evidence as I could thus collect in my intercourse with sheepowners holding all shades of opinion on this question was exceedingly difficult,—so much so, indeed, that at last I found I must accept the responsibility of deciding the question in accordance with my own opinion, which I found to be shared and approved of by sheepowners whose interests were not confined to one particular locality, and therefore, I conceived, were less likely to be unconsciously influenced in their judgement by what would be most conducive to the interests of sheepowners in the particular locality in which they resided.

On the first point I had no difficulty whatever in arriving at the conclusion, that the flocks in Tasmania generally had not attained that degree of freedom from disease which would conveniently admit of the public highways being closed on the 1st of May to all sheep but those absolutely clean within the meaning of the 1st section of the "Scab Act Amendment Act, No. 2."

On the second point I felt equally clear that a moderate extension of time would not subject holders of clean certificates to any hardship or material inconvenience.

And third, the deprivation of the Scab Act Fund of the amount which would be derived from renewals of Licences on the 1st of May, if the time should not be extended, and the consequent possibility of the holders of clean certificates having grounds of complaint, that they would not be placed in such a favourable position in that respect as they would otherwise occupy if no further extension of time took place, although a matter not unworthy of serious consideration so far as the interests of the "Scab Act Fund" were concerned, appeared to me, so far as the interests of any

individual sheepowner who had cleaned his sheep were likely to be affected, to be of too slight importance to influence a decision which on the point under consideration ought to be arrived at on principles consistent with the general policy of the Act, viz., the eradication of disease from the flocks of Tasmania, without any reckless or unnecessary interruption to commercial transactions in that description of live stock.

Having arrived at a definite conclusion on the several foregoing points, the next consideration was how far the period of extension should go. I felt this to be a most difficult matter to decide, inasmuch as the Act did not empower the Governor in Council to extend the period from time to time up to March, 1873—one extension only could take place. Under all the circumstances, and, as I conceived, keeping fully in view the general interests of sheepowners, the interests of the public at large, and the spirit and intendment of the Act, I thought the 1st of November the most convenient time to fix upon; and advised you accordingly in my letter of the 15th of April.

I may mention another consideration which was not overlooked when considering the question of extension; and I refer to it now in support of my former, and again more recently expressed opinion, with reference to the insufficiency of the inspecting power at my disposal.

On the 1st of May, if no extension of time had taken place, there would have been so many demands for inspections for clean certificates in the principal sheep districts, that it would have been a physical impossibility for Inspectors to have met them: this difficulty, although it will still exist on the 1st of November, will be very much lessened, inasmuch as the process of ascertaining the condition of sheep will be in active operation up to that time. A considerable number of flocks in a doubtful condition at present, even to their owners, before the month of November will have passed out of that condition either one way or the other; and there will be no difficulty in classing such flocks either as being clean, or as sheep for which renewed licences must be taken out under section 17 of the "Scab Act, 1870."

I have already addressed you at length on the question of the weakness of the Inspecting Staff, their inadequate pay, the insufficiency of the "Scab Act Fund" on the present basis of contribution, and the inconveniences attached to the mode of raising it, which I conceive might easily be obviated by a change in the form of contribution, of a nature both simple and equitable; it is therefore unnecessary for me to repeat the arguments used in my letter of the 14th instant on this subject.

I would only observe in addition to the arguments used in my last report, and in the letter above referred to, that any consideration of a few hundreds of pounds, more or less, in providing a sufficient staff to carry out the Scab Act, ought not to be a matter of any importance whatever when the magnitude of the individual and general gain derived from it is considered. I could very easily name a number of sheepowners, the combined increased annual income of any two of whom, derived solely from the operation of the Scab Act, would more than cover the whole cost of working it, even if it were placed upon a broader and more expensive basis than I have any desire to see it placed upon: any objection, therefore, which may be urged on the score of expense against the Inspecting Staff being placed on an efficient footing would seem to be pitiful. Assuredly it will be,—to use a homely but expressive phrase,—“penny wisdom and pound foolishness;” and, if successful, will have the effect of uselessly and most unnecessarily postponing the period when the Scab disease ought to be completely eradicated throughout the Island.

The number of cases in which it has been found necessary for Inspectors to institute prosecutions against sheepowners for travelling with diseased sheep, or exposing them for sale at public sale yards, have not been numerous since my last Report, although in some instances the penalties inflicted have been—and very properly so—heavier; and in a few instances owners of clean sheep have availed themselves of the provision contained in section 11 of the "Scab Act Amendment Act, No. 2," and where diseased sheep have been found in their flocks have compelled the owners of such sheep to pay the cost of dipping, &c. This provision I consider a most valuable one, and I hope in future to see it acted upon in all cases without any absurd delicacy about its being stigmatised by the careless sheepowner as unneighbourly. Nothing can be more conducive to the objects of the Act than the operation of the clause referred to, if generally acted upon, inasmuch as there is no argument so convincing to the minds of some owners of scabby sheep that it is necessary to exert themselves and clean them, than the fact that if they do not they will be every now and again subject to the unpleasant necessity of unbuttoning their breeches pocket to reimburse their neighbours for damage caused by their diseased sheep.

There is, I believe, in all communities a class of men opposed to everything, no matter what, in the way of reform, if it takes a shape which runs counter to their own ideas—ideas which custom, and in some instances the habits of a lifetime, have so confirmed that they persist in adhering to them as tenaciously as if they were matters of faith, any defection from which would be treason to the idol they have set up as their object of worship; and look upon any one who has the temerity to declare their faith a delusion, and their idol a sham, either to be a fool who prates of he knows not what, or a scheming knave who must have ulterior interests to serve at their expense.

The sheepowning body in Tasmania is not entirely free from men of this ultra conservative class. Their faith is, that because they have been the owners of sheep from boyhood up to middle, and even beyond middle life, therefore they must know better than any one else not only what is the best mode of managing their own sheep but what is best for their own interests; and their idol which they worship with intense devotion is the boasted liberty of an Englishman, who they persist in asserting, in opposition to their own daily experience, can do what he likes with his own, even if that, as in their case, should consist of a flock of scabby sheep liable to stray into their neighbour's grounds and infect their neighbour's sheep. Fortunately for the success of the Scab Act, and the interests of sheepowners, these ultra conservators of the "good old fashions of their forefathers" are very few in number, otherwise they would be formidable indeed, as they are generally men of substance and of deservedly good repute in the neighbourhoods in which they reside. Arguments in favour of an improved system if opposed to their own views are of little use with gentlemen of this peculiar and, in most cases, respectable stamp of character. Nothing will induce them to conform to a law they dislike but compulsion, which they call tyranny and denounce as "unconstitutional."

As a rule, however, the great body of sheepowners have been and are exerting themselves with energy to carry out the Act; and I believe from my own observations and from what I can learn a very full measure of success has attended their efforts. Many no doubt have failed, as was to be expected, from want of care or want of knowledge, not always on their own part but as frequently on the part of their neighbours; but I confidently anticipate that all those who have gone into the matter in earnest, and have failed this season, will succeed during the next. Even most of those who have failed in making an absolute cure have so greatly improved the condition of their flocks that it now almost requires an expert to detect the presence of disease. Where visible disease was the rule two years and a half ago it is now the exception. In point of fact an observant man thoroughly acquainted with the disease might travel from Bridgewater to Deloraine, not confining himself to the highways, attend all the public sales South and North at the same time, and the chances are that he might fail to observe a diseased sheep.

This fact alone,—and I assert it to be one as deduced from my own personal experience during various journeys I have made through the principal sheep districts since the month of January last,—I think must be admitted to be an unquestionable proof of a beneficial and most remarkable change in the condition of sheep generally having been effected in very little more than two years.

The number of sheep under clean certificates on the 1st of May was as follows:—

Southern Sheep District	2506
South-western ditto	112,248
Midland ditto	126,870
North-eastern ditto	43,192
North-western ditto	51,733
<i>Total under Clean Certificates.....</i>	<u>336,549</u>

By the end of June the above number will probably be increased to about 400,000.

If the extension of time had not been made, probably the number under clean certificates would have been increased about 50 per cent. by the end of this month, if the Inspectors could have accomplished the work, which I think doubtful.

At the same time, in addition to this, there are a very considerable number of flocks supposed to be clean both by their owners and the Inspectors, but they cannot be certain without a general muster, and that has been rendered unnecessary at present by the extension of time to the 1st of November.

The export of stud sheep in 1871 was confined to Victoria and New South Wales, unless some of those shipped to Victoria found their way to South Australia and New Zealand, as was the case with some of those shipped to New South Wales, 148 of which were purchased for Queensland.

SHEEP EXPORTED, 1871.

New South Wales.....	163	Value.....	£1500
Victoria	835	Ditto	3160
TOTAL			<u>£4660</u>

This is Custom House value at Hobart Town and Launceston, evidently much below the price which the exporters must have received. I think it may be safely assumed that these sheep realized to the Colony fully 50 per cent. on the above Custom House value, or about £7000.

The export of stud sheep in 1872 promises to exceed that of 1871. Up to the present date the number and value of sheep shipped are as under :—

	<i>Sheep.</i>	<i>Value.</i>
New South Wales.....	104 ..	£520
Victoria	378 ..	1450
Queensland.....	134 ..	558
New Zealand.....	365 ..	1000
TOTAL		£3528

The same observations made with reference to sheep shipped in 1871 will equally apply to the above values stated at the Custom House.

In connection with this subject I may quote some observations from a recent Report by the Chief Inspector of Sheep, Queensland, which I received a few days ago. That gentleman says, under the head of "State of Sheep in other Colonies:"—

"I have been favoured with exchanges from the Chief Inspectors of Stock of each of the Colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania, and as we draw on each of these Colonies for stud sheep the state of their flocks is a matter of interest to Queensland sheepowners. New South Wales continues perfectly free from disease, and as all her borders are so carefully guarded we stand in no danger of infection border-wise. The Chief Inspector for South Australia reports that the year has passed without any fresh outbreak, and that Colony may now be pronounced clean, with the single exception of two suspicious sheep detained at the Botanical Gardens. The new "Scab Act" continues to work satisfactorily in Victoria, and the number of diseased flocks is steadily decreasing. In Tasmania a vigorous effort is being made to exterminate Scab; but there, as in Victoria, the greatest obstacle to success exists in the difficulty of mustering and passing through the dip all the sheep of a diseased flock."

From the above it will be seen that in Queensland the operation of the "Scab Act" in Tasmania is looked upon as a subject of interest in connection with their supply of stud sheep. In the future, I believe there will be a large and constant demand for stud sheep in Queensland, New South Wales, and South Australia. The climate of Tasmania is admirably suited to produce the sheep they require,—an animal well adapted to repair and supply the deterioration of weight of fleece, length of staple, and strength of constitution, which the excessive heat of the Northern Colonies is calculated to produce. To secure this market, however, it is absolutely necessary that the Scab disease should be thoroughly eradicated.

The difficulty which the Queensland Chief Inspector refers to as existing in Tasmania and in Victoria, viz., "mustering and passing through the dip all the sheep of a diseased flock," experience has proved to be less difficult to surmount here than many feared it would be. Many owners of sheep on very scrubby runs have succeeded in cleaning them during the last 12 months. It is more difficult, doubtless, to collect sheep on such runs than where the country is comparatively open; but it has been found, as was predicted, to be a difficulty which energy and perseverance can easily overcome.

The live stock statistics for 1871, taken in March this year, and returns to this office under the "Scab Act," show a further diminution in the number of sheep to the extent of about 40,000. This will be seen from the following figures :—

		<i>Returned under Scab Act.</i>
From 1860 to 1869, average number of sheep	1,730,000	
1870	1,531,187	1,416,665
1871	1,349,775	1,349,134
1872	1,305,489	1,300,000

I have put down the return of sheep for the current year at 1,300,000, although up to the present date I have only received in a regular form 1,266,901. Returns that have been sent back for correction in respect to the one-fourth additional contribution not having been added, or for some other irregularity, will embrace about the difference between the number actually returned and the number stated as likely to be returned, viz. 1,300,000.

The following table of figures shows the distribution of Sheep in the different Districts, as returned to me up to this date :—

NUMBER of Sheep returned to the Chief Inspector for the Years 1870, 1871, and 1872.

<i>District.</i>	<i>Sheep returned to Chief Inspector, 1870.</i>	<i>Sheep returned to Chief Inspector, 1871.</i>	<i>Sheep returned to Chief Inspector, 1872.</i>
Bothwell	115,788	133,263	128,819
Brighton	24,809	25,223	21,645
Campbell Town	152,848	112,233	116,767
Clarence	13,341	11,718	10,882
Deloraine	16,621	14,972	13,877
Evandale	93,807	98,903	95,957
Fingal	108,119	94,198	94,644
George Town	45,278	37,281	27,236
Glamorgan	35,472	38,716	28,869
Green Ponds	42,284	34,885	33,422
Great Lake	61,684	56,207	50,175
Glenorchy	2410	1622	1506
Hamilton	143,989	144,942	136,957
Horton	9005	8780	7335
Huon	2605	3027	2314
Hobart and Kingborough	5615	5686	4931
Longford	114,094	106,633	107,067
New Norfolk	26,249	27,587	27,078
Oatlands	146,490	141,808	118,139
Port Sorell	4019	4449	3919
Richmond	42,607	50,867	46,396
Ross	61,492	63,721	59,847
Sorell	21,071	19,321	20,660
Spring Bay	41,292	40,962	42,074
Selby	41,893	33,839	34,737
Westbury	44,283	38,285	31,648
TOTAL	1,416,665	1,349,134	1,266,901

The further diminution in the number of sheep in 1871 I think is attributable mainly to three causes—the adverse season, the rabbits, and fluke. The lambing of last year was certainly not more than half an average one from want of food for the ewes, arising both from the want of a sufficient rainfall and the ravages of the rabbits. There was also some very cold stormy weather in the month of July, with snow on the low lands, all through the Midland and South-western Districts. I happened to be travelling through that part of the Country at the time, and what I then witnessed, in the way of lambs perishing from cold and want of food, strengthened an opinion which I have entertained for more than twenty years, that winter lambing is altogether a mistake in many localities in Tasmania, especially at the Salt Pan Plains, Ross, Oatlands, Bothwell, Hamilton, and I may say, the whole of the Southern, Eastern, and Western parts of the Island.

With regard to loss from rabbits, so great indeed has it been that I am now satisfied from my own observation, and from information I have been furnished with by several settlers of intelligence and, moreover, of experience, which has been brought home to them in a very convincing manner through the pocket, that for the years 1870, 1871, and at the present time, it may safely be estimated at an annual loss of food for 150,000 sheep. This may seem somewhat startling at first sight, but if it is considered that $4\frac{1}{2}$ rabbits are considered equal to one sheep in a grazing point of view, our wonder will cease. I am informed that this is the English estimate of the grazing capacity of rabbits—here I have heard it stated at 7 rabbits for one sheep. I am disposed to think, however, that the English estimate is likely to be the most correct one on this point. The extent of this plague I believe is not even yet thoroughly understood; and although recently the commercial value of the skins has induced considerable activity in destroying the rabbits in various parts of the Country, I fear that unless even greater exertions are used than the mere commercial value of the skins will induce, no thorough or permanent alleviation of the evil will be effected. The commercial value of the skins certainly has become considerable, and I will now give some details connected with that subject to show how very moderate my rough calculation of last year was when I stated the annual loss from rabbits at the destruction of food for 50,000 sheep.

I have within the last few days obtained evidence from the Custom House and other perfectly reliable sources that within the last 12 months 609,174 rabbit skins have been exported (chiefly from Hobart Town), and that at the present moment there are in store and in course of preparation in the country at least 50,000 more. I find, therefore, that in 12 months about 650,000 rabbits have been destroyed, the skins of which are accounted for. I think it will not be an exaggerated estimate if to this we add 350,000 more for rabbits destroyed by poison and in various other ways, the skins of which are not accounted for,—making the number destroyed 1,000,000 in all.

If we take into account the number still left after the 1,000,000 were disposed of, which must be enormous, as in many places they almost appear to be as numerous as ever, I think we may safely estimate that at any time during the last 12 months there could not be less than 700,000 rabbits existing on the runs. If this be a fact, and I firmly believe it to be one, the difficulty under which I was labouring last year when endeavouring to account for the diminution in the number of sheep, which could not be traced to losses by fluke and increase of cattle, is, in a great measure, overcome; because if rabbits in Tasmania consume as much food as they do in England, they must, for the last three years, have been destroying the pasturage of 150,000 sheep, as well as a large amount of crops on cultivated land, particularly in the Oatlands district, which it would be almost impossible to form any accurate estimate of. The loss on sheep, however, we can form a pretty correct calculation of. On wool alone for the current year it would not be less than £33,750; and if to that is added loss in mutton and loss arising from the inferior condition of the reduced number of sheep on the runs at present in the districts of Campbell Town, Ross, Oatlands, Green Ponds, Bothwell, and Hamilton, where rabbits most prevail, and which may be considered fairly traceable to their existence, the total will not fall short of £50,000 per annum.

I observe it has been recently stated in the press that opinions I ventured to give in my last Report with reference to losses from rabbits and fluke were mere haphazard guesses which could satisfy no one,—that rabbits were confined to a particular area, &c. Now this is altogether a mistake. The areas within which rabbits are now to be found are so wide that it would be difficult to define them, and they are still spreading in every direction. The losses by fluke, although not so great in 1870 and 1871 as in some former years, were still very heavy. Losses by fluke are not paraded, they are rather concealed; and it is therefore difficult to arrive at anything like an approximately correct estimate how far such losses have contributed to the reduction in the number of sheep. Of this I feel certain, that if every sheepowner were to give a correct account of his losses by fluke, those losses would far exceed any estimate that has ever yet been made of them. That they have diminished, and are still diminishing, I fear is more to be attributed to the abandonment of runs liable to produce fluke than to any real diminution of the disease, excepting in a few localities where the land has been drained.

Draining appears to be the only remedy for this disease when it has once established itself, and without it it appears hopeless to expect that we shall ever see those lands again profitably occupied by sheep.

The yearly diminution of importations of fat bullocks and sheep shown in my last Report has been continued in 1871, as follows:—

	£
1870. Bullocks 1640; Sheep 17,900: value.....	27,945
1871. Bullocks 926; Sheep 13,053: value	18,230
Decrease.....	<u>£9,715</u>

Importations of sheep are now beginning to take place, and in all probability will be continued at intervals during the next five months: 700 sheep only have arrived up to this date. No bullocks have as yet been imported; and so well has the market been supplied with good meat up to this time that prices have been kept as yet below what would leave a reasonable margin of profit to importers. There appears to be every probability that 1872 will show a further diminution in importations of fat bullocks and sheep; and I hope that in 1873 we shall be entirely independent of foreign supplies, and at the same time, I trust, have prices at a rate which, while they are remunerative to the grazier, will not press too heavily upon the consumer.

I have again much pleasure in reporting my perfect satisfaction with the manner in which the several members of the Inspecting Staff have performed their duties. While they have been vigilant to detect breaches of the Act, and have invariably followed up detection by a prosecution of the offender, no matter who he might be, or what his position in the community, they have at the same time acquired the good-will and the cordial support of the great bulk of the sheepowners in their several districts. Eighteen months ago an Inspector was looked upon by a large number of sheepowners with nearly as much suspicion and dislike as they would have viewed a Sheriff's officer armed with a writ. Now by the same class of men he is rather hailed as a protector from the wrong-doer in the shape of a reckless, careless, or indolent owner of diseased sheep.

The number of sheep specially inspected by the District Inspectors from the 1st of November to the 1st of June is over 500,000.

Miles travelled by Inspectors	13,443
Ditto Chief Inspector.....	1550

Inspections made by myself I have not thought it necessary to specify particularly; and I may remark that the number of sheep inspected by any individual Inspector does not give any correct

idea of the amount of his work. Cases sometimes arise when an Inspector may have to travel a hundred miles to inspect one sheep, and on another occasion he may inspect some thousands without travelling a fourth of the distance.

Before concluding this Report I desire to call your attention to the fact that the "Foot and Mouth Disease" has been introduced to Victoria by cattle recently imported from England; and that the cattle on two different farms somewhere in the neighbourhood of Melbourne have in consequence been destroyed to prevent the spread of the disease. In New South Wales the subject has given rise to considerable discussion for some months past, and a strong feeling of alarm had been produced in the minds of cattle-holders in that Colony before the late outbreak in Victoria. Since then I observe that for the present an interdict has been placed upon cattle entering New South Wales from Victoria pending the result of the energetic steps taken in that Colony to stamp out the disease at once by destroying all the cattle suspected of having been within the sphere of infection.

It is to be hoped that the measures which have been adopted in Victoria will effectually prevent the spread of this frightful scourge into the interior. If the disease should gain a permanent footing in that Colony or in New South Wales, it will become a matter for very grave consideration what steps should be adopted to prevent its introduction into Tasmania.

This is a subject which, strictly speaking, perhaps, does not come within the scope of my present duties; but as I am very sensible what a calamity to cattle-holders it would prove if this destructive disease should be introduced into the herds of Tasmania, I deem it my duty to call the attention of the Government to the circumstances above referred to.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

JAMES WHYTE, *Chief Inspector of Sheep.*

The Hon. J. M. WILSON, Colonial Secretary.