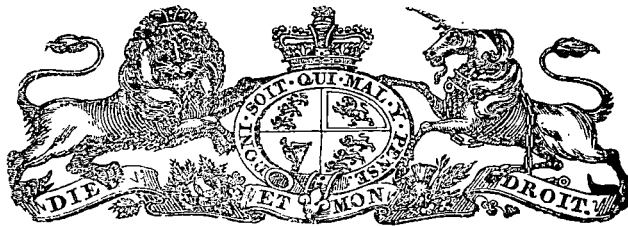


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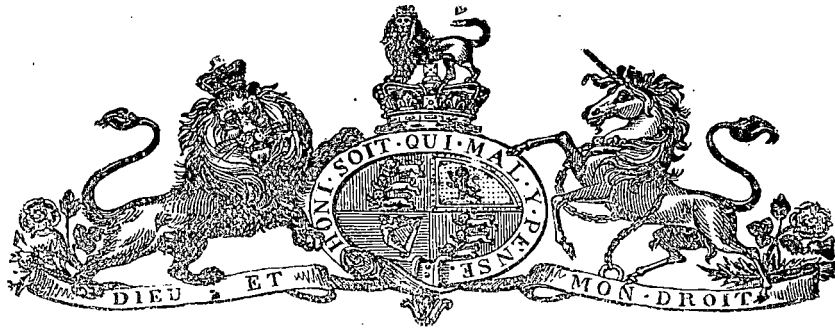
PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

REPORT BY CHIEF INSPECTOR

On the working of the Stock, Rabbit Destruction, Vegetation Diseases
and Codlin Moth Acts for the year 1898-9.

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

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Stock Branch, Hobart, 30th June, 1900.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to furnish my Report under the Stock, Rabbit Destruction, Vegetation Diseases, and Codlin Moth Acts for the past year.

The sheep in the Colony still continue free from scab, and the herds from pleuro-pneumonia. It has been deemed prudent to continue the enforcement of strict quarantine provisions, which are condemned in unmeasured terms by irresponsible persons as absurd and unnecessary, but the fact is established that disease has not been introduced under existing regulations, which is gratifying to the department.

In June last a report was freely circulated that pleuro existed in some of the northern cattle. Information was sought to locate the disease, with the result that the allegations were proved unfounded. An assertion, unsustainable, was made, and the department informed that the disease, when next seen, would be reported. Needless to say, this information has not come to hand.

The restrictions upon sheep and cattle from Queensland have been renewed, and pigs from that Colony are prohibited, these precautions being necessary to guard against the introduction of swine fever.

Since the advent of Centralisation and, with it, the appointment of superintendents of police as inspectors of stock, I have been enabled to exercise supervision over the sale-yards, and thereby strictly enforce the branding provisions of the Stock Act. A number of informations have been laid, with convictions following, so that sheep-owners are now careful not to exhibit sheep unbranded. This will have a deterrent effect upon sheep-stealing. Monthly reports are furnished by inspectors of sheep marketed, describing the brands and change of owners.

The "Dipping Act" still awaits amendment to make it workable and useful legislation. I must urge that additions and alterations be effected during the present session of Parliament, viz.—

1. The length of time within which sheep-owners shall dip their flocks is too long: from the 1st August to 1st February in the following year, and within fourteen days after shearing is, I consider, ample time in which to dip sheep. No sheep should be allowed to leave a secure paddock after shearing, until dipped, the reason being that upon large and rough runs, when sheep are once turned out they are seldom again collected until the following shearing, so that a few sheep may remain to re-infect the dipped portion of the flock, making the trouble and expense of dipping futile.
2. Provision must be made to protect those who have sheep free from ticks; careless owners will not sufficiently immerse in a tick-destroying preparation to kill the pest, and, having once dipped, under the present Act, are free to travel and market such sheep, and should be made to pay for their neglect. If the Act is provided to eradicate ticks a clause must be added, giving power to compel the re-dipping of sheep infested with ticks, and provide a penalty for travelling infested sheep.
3. There is also need for amendment in the direction of issue of certificates of cleanness from ticks in a flock. The owner should make a declaration that his flock is free from tick. The Inspector can then inspect and certify to the best of his belief, that the flock is clean. It is morally impossible for an Inspector, after shearing, to find ticks in a flock of sheep; the owner should know the state of his flock, and the responsibility must fall upon him.

Again, no provision is made for the dipping of imported sheep. These should be accompanied by a certificate that they are free from ticks, but, if upon inspection, they prove the reverse, they should be immediately dipped at the expense and risk of the importer, before being removed from the port of entry.

The Statistician's report for 1898-99 will certainly show a considerable increase of sheep over that of 1897-98. This, of necessity, follows, from the high lambing percentages that were recorded last year by most sheepowners throughout the Colony. The shortage of breeding ewes caused a large demand for this class of sheep, the prices being disproportionate to the quality of the stock offered; nevertheless, high prices were booked against those obliged to purchase, who were happily compensated by the advanced price of wool. Those who took advantage of the high ruling rates, and sold in the Colonies, must congratulate themselves upon their year's turnover. The season up to within the past month has been unusually dry, the shortness of feed throughout the Eastern, Western, and Midland districts being most detrimental to the condition of stock, and caused many owners to submit stock to the hammer, that, under ordinary conditions, could have been held to advantage. Notwithstanding the drought in these localities, the fat stock market has been well supplied from the North West Coast and the northern side of the Island. I apprehend a substantial advance will take place in fat stock during the coming winter months, from the fact that Tasmania will have to depend upon her own resources for meat supply, consequent upon a correspondingly bad season on the Mainland, and dearth of fat stock, hence advanced rates must be anticipated.

Stud Sheep.—My notes upon the merit of the stud Merino sheep exported in 1899 were fully realised, and the satisfactory sales are most encouraging to breeders. Every season records sheep passing to the Mainland breeders up to £1000, and still Tasmanian paddocks graze others of as high pedigree and equal merit, which will doubtless be sought for as eagerly. Shropshire breeders are most sanguine that this is a coming sheep, and are encouraged to export to the annual sales in Australia. This breed is popularising itself with small producers: its early maturity and thriftiness create a great demand for symmetrical and good-conditioned animals.

The following table shows the export trade in stud sheep to the adjoining Colonies since 1870 up to the 30th June of the present year, with the Custom House value thereon:—

Year.	Number.	Value.	Year.	Number.	Value.	Year.	Number.	Value.
		£			£			£
1870.....	807	4115	1881	1306	38,305	1891	6581	74,892
1871.....	998	4660	1882	1937	34,012	1892	5398	37,774
1872.....	2433	15,500	1883	2913	62,275	1893	7262	52,464
1873.....	2586	15,547	1884	3244	60,758	1894	3985	24,229
1874.....	1997	20,895	1885	2825	51,325	1895	4384	21,034
1875.....	1673	23,414	1886	2207	32,689	1896	3208	21,172
1876.....	1403	18,157	1887	4005	54,337	1897	3949	27,046
1877.....	1303	10,103	1888	4140	56,045	1898	5482	22,244
1878.....	651	8485	1889	4660	60,472	1899	4316	25,343
1879.....	1496	47,259	1890*.....	4748	65,110	1900	4494	38,838
1880	—	—						

* Owing to delay in the sailing of the vessel, 2816 of these sheep, valued at £44,455, were not shipped until early in July.

THE RABBITS DESTRUCTION ACT.

The working of this Act under centralised police has not solved, to any appreciable degree, the important question of rabbit destruction; friction has occurred between superintendents or police and wardens of municipalities, so much so, that a bench of magistrates, for dismissing a case under the Act, has been called upon by a superintendent of one district to state a case for the Supreme Court. The decision is anxiously awaited, as similar conditions bearing upon the ruling are involved in other districts.

In dealing with pests I have always held that that there can only be one director—no side issues can be entertained. It has been held by a bench of magistrates that a centralised superintendent of police who is appointed a Stock Inspector for the purposes of this Act by the Governor in Council, must also be appointed an inspector by the municipal council of the district before he can enforce the provisions of the Rabbit Act, and that he must be subservient to the Council as to the services of notices, subsequent laying of informations, and the furnishing of reports.

There is no gainsaying the fact that rabbits are increasing and spreading. Undoubtedly, the dry weather has assisted the rapidity of breeding. In the Oatlands district absence of work during the breeding season and suspension of supervision, pending decision of appeal, have injuriously affected the landowner, who must look for redress from those who caused unnecessary friction.

I would hope to record, in the future, a more favourable opinion of police supervision as an agent to compulsory rabbit destruction; if the officers were unhampered in the work that is expected of them, and were permitted to perform their unpleasant duties without interference from municipal authorities (who are occasionally large landed proprietors and, consequently, averse to compulsory measures being adopted to cause them to destroy rabbits) the purposes of the Act would then be successfully demonstrated.

Another great handicap to the success of centralised police in rabbit destruction is the continual moving of officers from district to district. This places an inspector at a great disadvantage for the reason that, when he commences to find out the rabbit country and their haunts upon the properties of those owners who try to evade the law, he is moved on to new ground, and the knowledge of locality he has acquired is lost, and the infested country, consequently, neglected.

The number and value of rabbit-skins exported from the Colony during the past seven years, as per Customs Returns, are as follow:—

	No.	Value. £
1893.....	3,590,474	23,278
1894.....	3,541,464	16,194
1895.....	3,377,654	15,499
1896.....	3,716,126	17,182
1897.....	3,302,099	13,625
1898.....	2,604,750	19,280
1899.....	4,204,744	36,994

THE VEGETATION DISEASES ACT.

The above Act has been stringently enforced; regulations have received the consent of the Governor-in-Council and are now in operation naming certain fruit pests, and prohibiting fruit infested therewith from entering the Colony. Imported fruit shipments have, therefore, had considerable attention. The risk of introducing fruit fly caused me to recommend the appointment of inspectors at the ports of Hobart, Launceston, Devonport, Burnie, and Strahan, to which effect was given. A large number of consignments have been destroyed, and, in a few instances, some fruit has been returned. Further regulations were passed being the outcome of a meeting convened by the Hon. the Minister for Agriculture with the Managers of the Union s.s. Coy. and Messrs. Huddart, Parker and Coy., which permits of fruit being inspected on the vessel before removal. The thanks of fruitgrowers and the department are justly accorded to these gentlemen for their desire to assist and co-operate with the Government in its endeavour to exclude from the Colony additional pests. The Government has further provided that, if imported fruit is found to be infested with any pest included in the Regulations, the fruit and cases shall either be jettisoned at sea, or taken back to the port of shipment.

Prior to the prohibition being placed upon trees, two consignments were detected, containing the dreaded "San Jose scale." One packet was from a nurseryman in New South Wales, carrying an inspector's certificate of having been treated with hydrocyanic acid gas for one hour. These shipments were destroyed by the entomologist, who detected the scale. It is only by the greatest care and watchfulness in preventing the introduction of orchard pests that Tasmania will be enabled to maintain her reputation in the English Market for the export of high quality fruit, and our Customs returns show fruit as the Colonies second largest export.

THE CODLIN MOTH ACT.

The carrying out of the above is expensive to orchardists, and continues to annoy, as all legislation must when penal clauses exist, but without coercion nothing would be attempted, and, notwithstanding the infliction of fines, the orchardist, whose very existence depends upon the cleanliness of the fruit, will neglect even the most ordinary precautions to reduce the grub, which, I regret to say, after ten years' trial under Fruit Boards, is as bad as ever. In two northern districts I have been obliged to prosecute and institute prosecutions against large numbers of orchardists. I visited thirty-six orchards, the owners of which were proceeded against, also two district inspectors. I must repeat that, generally, under Boards, the inspectors do not examine with the care and continuous supervision that should be devoted to orchards, particularly those that are infested, and when neglect is plainly visible. Too much is taken for granted, and, consequently, the pest continues to thrive.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

THOMAS A. TABART, *Chief Inspector.*

The Hon. the Minister for Agriculture.