

country, most of the rabbits come down into the valleys before the snow in winter, and could be killed wholesale if trustworthy men were engaged poisoning in winter; but of course it is against the interest of men who are making their living by the skins to do so; and before letting hill runs to rabbiters, who have nothing to lose, a good deposit or bond should be insisted on that poisoned grain would be properly used. In the event of any alterations being made in "The Rabbit Nuisance Act, 1880," I would strongly urge the necessity of making clause 17 to read, "The Trustees, or their duly-appointed Inspector or other officer to sign the notice." This would save a lot of valuable time: the Trustees living from twenty to seventy miles apart, it takes a long time to get a quorum together. It would still remain for them to take action or not, as they saw fit. Also, in clause 18, after receiving notice to kill from the Trustees or their Inspector, the onus of proving efficient steps should be thrown on the occupier, as it is very difficult to prove a negative, and one stubborn landowner can neutralize the efforts of all his neighbours. One legal notice should hold good for, say, six months. Good poisoned grain will kill rabbits several weeks after it is made, and rabbits will eat it amongst good feed, and in the summer time, when the weather is showery. I shall be happy to give you any further information in my power, and remain, ALFRED DOUGLAS, Inspector, West Oreti Rabbit District.—Invercargill, 31st May, 1881.

No. 5.—From Mr. G. E. TOLHURST.

My Victorian correspondent advises me as follows: "I have your favour of 10th ultimo, asking for information as to the desirability of introducing foxes for the purpose of clearing rabbits, and I have to inform you that the Messrs. Chirnside and some of their neighbours have tried the foxes without success. As your friend surmises, the foxes make great havoc amongst the lambs, and the former have multiplied so much on Mr. Bullivant's property, near Larra, that a hunting party the other day managed to run down and kill thirteen of them. Foxes will not do."—GEORGE E. TOLHURST.—Wellington, 16th July, 1881.

(Telegram.)

No. 6.—From Mr. J. GALL.

If Government does not arrange to destroy rabbits on Crown land country will be ruined. No necessity for new department; Sheep Inspectors should look after work. Ask in House what Government intention is.—JAS. GALL.

No. 7.—RESOLUTIONS by the TRUSTEES of the MASTERTON RABBIT DISTRICT.

THAT, in the opinion of this Board, although it is expedient and necessary to check the rabbit pest, it is unfair in principle, and unjust to the ratepayers to spend their money on Government lands, and lands in the possession of Maoris. (2.) That all attempts to exterminate the rabbit pest will be ineffectual while the exemptions of the Act of 1880 be allowed and that, therefore, all those exemptions should be removed, and all Government lands, and lands belonging to the Maoris, as well as those within boroughs, be brought under the operation of the amended Rabbit Act. (3.) That a special clause be inserted in the amended Act dealing with lands belonging to absentees, whose whereabouts is unknown, making the land responsible for rates as well as expenses incurred in destroying rabbits thereon. (4.) That any landowner who encloses the whole of his property with rabbit-proof fencing, either independently or with the co-operation of his neighbours, should, so long as he maintains the same in good order, be exempt from payment of rates; but that such landowner should not thereby be relieved from supervision by any ranger or person appointed by the Trustees in that capacity. (5.) That, it having been decided in cases already tried in the Masterton District that under section 18 personal notice is necessary and, considering the great inconvenience and expense of serving such notices on absentee proprietors, the same process as is directed under section 17 should be made applicable to section 18.—F. G. MOORE, Secretary.

No. 8.—From Mr. D. A. CAMERON.

From experience, I am of opinion that Rabbit Trusts, Rabbit Inspectors, and rabbit rates are altogether unnecessary, and should be abolished. That the office of Sheep, Cattle, and Rabbit Inspector should be combined, and that the sheep-rate be administered so as to cover any additional expense thereby incurred. That, in the execution of his combined duties, the Inspector be responsible to the head of his department, and not to the County Council, as the division of authority in this case would prove unsatisfactory in its results. . . .—DONALD A. CAMERON—Southland, 21st July, 1881.

No. 9.—EXTRACT from the Report upon the Crown Lands Department, Year 1881, C-5, by JAMES MCKERROW, Secretary for Crown Lands.

Rabbit Pest.

CLOSELY connected with the settlement of the country is the difficulty of coping with this evil. It can be kept under by poisoning, shooting, and introduction of natural enemies; but where there is a region of broken back-country the contest has to be maintained from season to season at great expense, which is only partially met by the sale of skins. The carrying capacity of the infested country is of course seriously diminished, and some of the higher-lying runs have been abandoned altogether, very much from this cause. This in itself would not be so material, were it not that the abandoned country becomes the breeding-ground for fresh hordes, which overrun the lower occupied country. It is manifest that any partial treatment is unequal to the suppression of an evil which now affects several millions of acres of Crown and freehold lands. Rigorous concerted action is necessary; and this cannot be expected of district associations, unless under the compulsion and direction of one authority. It therefore devolves on Government to possess itself of powers that will require every person to keep his ground clear on pain of severe penalties. This implies that Government must clear the unoccupied Crown lands; and if these measures succeed in reducing the pest to small dimensions, as certainly they would, the expense would be far more than recouped in the increased carrying capacity of the country, and the greater rentals that would be got in reletting. Increasing the number of runs and holdings will in one way tend to diminish the evil by having more persons to contend against it; but, in the increase of settlers, there will be still greater need for Government inspection of rabbit districts, because the neglect of two or three persons in a district to keep their ground clear would render abortive in a great measure the efforts of those who did.

No. 10.—From Mr. H. S. MCKELLAR.

RETURN of the Number and Value of Rabbitskins exported from New Zealand during the past three years, and to 31st March, 1881:—In 1878, 3,976,409 skins, value £33,460; 1879, 5,384,506 skins, value £46,759; 1880, 7,505,616 skins, value £66,976; 1881 (March quarter), 1,413,739 skins, value £11,915: total, 18,280,270 skins, value £159,110. The June quarter's returns have not all been received at this office.—H. S. MCKELLAR (for Secretary and Inspector).—Customs Department, Wellington, 12th July, 1881.

No. 11.—From Mr. J. P. MAITLAND.

RETURN giving names of Lessees, Area, and Locality in which situate, of all Runs which have been abandoned in consequence of the Rabbit Pest:—

No. 389, 40,000 acres, Lake and Wallace County; No. 391, 50,000 acres, Southland County; and No. 452, 19,400 acres, Lake and Southland County: Lessee, Hon. R. Campbell, jun. Board asked to accept surrender on account of rabbit pest; matter referred to the Government, who refused to comply with the request; but the country has remained unoccupied.

Runs Abandoned, but since Relet.

No. 415, 64,560 acres, North Mairā Lake: Lessee, Hon. R. Campbell, jun. Relet to Joseph Weir and Sons, for ten years, at £35 per annum, from 2nd April, 1880.

No. 416, 74,000 acres, Clintonside: Lessee, Hon. R. Campbell, jun. Relet to Messrs. Kemp and Boyd, for ten years, at £20 per annum, from 25th February, 1881.

No. 418, 30,000 acres, Greenstone Valley: Lessee, Hon. R. Campbell, jun. Relet to Henry Steele, for ten years, at £15 per annum, from 2nd April, 1880.