

1882.
NEW ZEALAND.

LIVE STOCK AND RABBITS.

(REPORT AS TO RABBITS.)

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

REPORT ON THE WORKING OF "THE RABBIT NUISANCE ACT, 1881," BY MR. B. P. BAYLY, SUPERINTENDING INSPECTOR OF RABBITS.

MR. B. P. BAYLY, Superintending Inspector under "The Rabbit Nuisance Act, 1881," to the
COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Wellington, 23rd June, 1882.

I have the honor to submit the following remarks with reference to the rabbit pest in the colony, and the steps taken to abate the nuisance.

The Rabbit Nuisance Committee of 1881 having fully ventilated the question as to the spread of the evil and damage done thereby, it seems unnecessary to reopen that matter now. I shall confine myself, therefore, to what has been done since the Act of 1881 came into force on the 19th September.

I may say that during the last ten years the evil has increased sufficiently to make itself felt, and from time to time steps were taken by local trusts to grapple with the evil so apparent. Although undoubtedly good work was effected in some places, yet the want of combined and general action clearly showed that an Act to deal universally with the whole colony became a necessity.

The Act of 1881 having placed the administration of the law in the hands of the Government, the first action taken was the constitution of districts and appointing of officers. To simplify matters it was determined that the boundaries of the districts should be coterminous with county boundaries. It was also deemed expedient to appoint the Sheep Inspectors as Rabbit Inspectors, so as to work the Sheep and Rabbit Acts conjointly, thus saving the necessity of a new and separate staff of officers.

NORTH ISLAND.

In November, 1881, the Wairarapa Rabbit District was constituted, and the Act brought into operation. To meet the requirements of the Act, assistants as authorized agents were employed by the Inspector. Contracts were entered into when possible for the destruction of the pest on Crown lands and reserves, and the importation of ferrets to turn out on these lands was decided upon.

The Districts of Napier, Wellington, and Gisborne have been constituted, to prevent the introduction of rabbits and the spread of the pest into those parts of the colony, and to legalize action of Inspectors in protecting the natural enemies of the rabbits. For these districts there are four Inspectors, all of whom are Inspectors of Sheep, together with ten authorized agents, three of the latter being Inspectors of Sheep. In selecting the authorized agents for employment by the various Inspectors endeavours have been made to obtain the services of those who, by their knowledge of the country and capabilities, were best qualified to assist in having the requirements of the Act complied with.

SOUTH ISLAND.

In November and December full inquiry was instituted as to the best manner of forming districts, and appointing of officers. Consequent upon such inquiry, in February last Otago and Southland were divided into nine districts. The Blenheim and Kaikoura Rabbit Districts, in Marlborough, were also constituted, and inspectors appointed to the different districts.

For the eleven districts there are thirteen Inspectors, all of whom are Inspectors of Sheep, together with sixteen authorized agents employed by them.

Not until February could it be said that work had actually commenced. Even then, a great amount of information had to be acquired before the Inspectors were in a position to commence active duties.

In working the Act, the different descriptions of lands to be dealt with may be classed as freehold and leasehold, waste lands of the Crown, and Native reserves, and reserves as classed under Schedule of "The Public Reserves Act, 1881." These do not, however, include lands within boroughs, which are exempted by the Act, and the duty of removing rabbits from these borough lands is cast upon the Government. With freehold or leasehold lands only ordinary difficulties are encountered, as the establishment of ownership is easily determined; but with the reserves, owing to the many and divers purposes for which they were set apart, it becomes a work of endless difficulty to ascertain their position and then establish ownership. Where vested in public bodies, such bodies are as a rule difficult to deal with, and legal proceedings become surrounded with complications. These reserves often number a hundred in one district, especially in the South Island.