

SESS. II.—1891.  
NEW ZEALAND.

THE RABBIT NUISANCE.

(ANNUAL REPORTS OF INSPECTORS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1891.)

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.*

SIR,—  
Live Stock Department, Wellington, 31st July, 1891.  
I have the honour to hand you herewith the Annual Reports for the different districts of the colony for the year ending 31st March, 1891.  
I have, &c.,  
JOHN D. RITCHIE,  
Chief Inspector.  
The Hon. J. McKenzie, Minister of Lands and Agriculture.

AUCKLAND DISTRICT.

THE statement herewith, showing the number of rabbit-skins brought in to Kihikihi during the year ended the 31st March, 1890, and the same month of 1891, is forwarded to you for your information. It is also divided into two parts, for, owing to some alteration in the price paid per skin, the Maoris were not working to any extent during April to August, 1889, the whole period cannot be used for purposes of comparison.

The nine months of 1889-90 and the same period ending the 31st March, 1891, shows an increase of 11,337. This increase may perhaps be considered comparatively reassuring, for, judging by other parts of the colony, a much more alarming increase would certainly have been realised. It would almost appear from this that the rabbit will not develop here into the devastating plague that it once was in the South.

The breed of the rabbit here is said to be not identical with that of the rabbit in other parts of the colony, but in appearance they are certainly alike, except that the King-country rabbit is somewhat smaller than those in the south. To some extent the plan (Redier's) of killing only females is put into effect, for the Maoris kill chiefly by digging out, so that of grown skins they get more females than males. I am still of opinion that the absence of the natural grasses is the chief reason that the rabbit has not increased here as it has done in other districts in New Zealand.

A check has been put on the Maoris hunting over European's lands partly by those among them who fear that the bonus may be stopped, and partly by certain Maoris who when so hunting were found, and whose skins were refused when offered for sale.

Attention has been directed to the most menacing aspect of the rabbit, its approach to the better grassed and more valuable lands near Te Kuiti, and on the larger properties about Cambridge owners are taking means to kill off the rabbits on their lands. But, except in the King-country, rabbits can scarcely be said to be spreading; they are more noticed because settlers' attention is being more directed to them, but rabbits or their traces can be found practically over the whole district, but nowhere in any number.

Auckland, 6th April, 1891. E. CLIFTON, Inspector.

STATEMENT showing Rabbit-skins Purchased from the Natives in the Waikato during the Financial Years 1889-90 and 1890-91.

1889.			1890.		
April 17	...	3,420	April 15	...	2,391
May 25	...	781	May 13	...	4,422
June 12	...	545	June 10	...	1,805
July 10	...	1,070	July 8	...	4,311
Aug. 7	...	56	Aug. 5	...	3,837
		5,872			16,766
Sept. 4	...	5,740	Sept. 2	...	11,102
Oct. 2	...	15,565	Sept. 30	...	11,217
Oct. 30	...	18,651	Oct. 28	...	17,593
Nov. 27	...	18,989	Nov. 25	...	24,736
Dec. 23	...	16,786	Dec. 23	...	17,517
1890.			1891.		
Jan. 29	...	9,989	Jan. 20	...	10,756
Feb. 18	...	5,611	Feb. 17	...	5,823
Mar. 18	...	5,552	Mar. 18	...	9,476
		96,883			108,220

Increase, 11,337.