

dating and repealing these Acts, but unfortunately time did not permit of its being considered. During the recess the opportunity was taken of sending copies to all agricultural and pastoral societies, with a request that they would, after consideration, forward any alterations deemed advisable. A number of replies have been received, and a Bill is now being prepared embodying such of these suggestions as are considered of sufficient importance. This Bill will be found to contain, in a simple and concise form, all that is necessary to ensure the proper working of our stock, and I hope to see it become law at an early date.

#### STOCK CONFERENCE.

Last July a circular letter was addressed to the several Australasian Governments inviting them to send representatives to discuss matters relating to stock, and allied subjects, and to which several responded by accepting the invitation. In the appendix will be found the names of the gentlemen present and the final report of the Conference. In connection with the Conference several papers of much value were read—namely, on cross-breeding of sheep, by Mr. John Roberts, C.M.G.; frozen-mutton industry, by Mr. T. Brydone; successful rabbit suppression, by Mr. Coleman Phillips; and period of quarantine, by Mr. T. A. Tabart; all of which elicited considerable discussion.

Perhaps the most important subject considered was the removal of the restrictions on the importation of our sheep into the Australian Colonies. Steps had been taken previous to the Conference to have a thorough inspection made of the flocks in the last infected districts, and that being satisfactory, no hesitation was felt in asking the delegates to recommend the removal of the restrictions. This was agreed to, provided that the flocks, on inspection at shearing were found healthy. I am glad to say this was proved to be the case; and in response to the request made to have the terms of the resolution carried out, the following complied—namely, Queensland, New South Wales, and South Australia. Victoria and Tasmania still hesitate, owing to a mistaken idea that the gad-fly (*Estrus ovis*) is prevalent amongst our flocks; they seem, from newspaper reports, to have confounded the horse-bot (*Gastrophilus equi*) with the gad-fly; the former, unfortunately, is prevalent here, but has never been known to attack sheep. A few cases of gad-fly have been reported, and, although known to have existed in the colony for many years, it has not spread—in fact, in many parts is quite unknown.

The quarantine regulations were carefully considered, and several important decisions arrived at, amongst these being the reduction of the period of quarantine on sheep from ninety to sixty days; the removal of the prohibition on the importation of swine, which are now allowed to land under quarantine; the reduction from six months to three months of the period required to elapse before a vessel can come under the definition “clean,” and some others of lesser importance.

After the Conference I had the pleasure of accompanying the delegates from New South Wales and Queensland over a large portion of the South Island. We visited a number of the freezing-works, dairy-factories, and private properties, from Christchurch to as far south as Invercargill. They were fortunate in being able to be present at the Christchurch Annual Show, where they gained much information about the different longwool breeds of sheep. They had also an opportunity of visiting Lincoln College, where they were shown every kindness by the Acting Director, Mr. Gray. Messrs. Bruce and Gordon visited a considerable portion of the North Island before the Conference, and also when on their way to catch the steamer at Auckland. The delegates, before leaving, one and all expressed themselves as highly pleased with what they saw here. Since Mr. Bruce's return he has presented a report, containing much valuable information, and highly favourable to this colony. His report deals exhaustively with the merits of long wool rams for crossing purposes, and this, together with the removal of the restrictions, has already borne fruit, several shipments of sheep having been sent over; and other transactions are pending. For a time, at least, there is sure to be a strong demand, especially for rams; and for the credit of the colony it is to be hoped that nothing but first-class animals will be shipped.

*Veterinary Surgeons.*—The department has for some months been without a veterinary surgeon, and, to fill this want, the Agent-General was requested to secure the services of two gentlemen well qualified for the work required. Advices to hand report the engagement of Mr. John Andrew Gilruth and Mr. J. R. Charlton, gentlemen holding very high credentials, and of considerable experience in their profession; they may be expected here during the next three months.

#### RABBITS.

From the local Inspectors' reports it will be seen that in certain districts the pest still holds its own. The reasons given for this being the want of unanimity of action amongst landowners, general apathy shown in dealing with the pest, and the favourable season for breeding, the latter being especially so in parts of Southland. On the other hand, in many districts there is considerable improvement, and with more united measures and improved methods I have great hopes that this incoming season will show a large diminution in their numbers.

*Auckland.*—There has been a considerable increase in the amount paid for rabbit-skins from the King-country, and some other method must be adopted to deal effectually with the nuisance there. There are great difficulties to contend with. The Natives show no desire to eradicate the pest; poisoned grain cannot be used for fear of killing their pigs; and unless the land is speedily purchased the evil is sure to grow worse.

*Hawke's Bay.*—The Rabbit Board still continues to do good work, and their jurisdiction has lately been extended so as to take in a piece of fresh country found to be slightly infested with the pest.

*Wairarapa.*—I also inspected part of the North Wairarapa County, and regret to say that I found the pest numerous on several properties, but on one only was it especially bad. Proceedings