

In country infested with the rabbit not only is the pasture soiled, but the constant disturbance of the stock in destroying the pest enfeebled the sheep to such a degree that they were in no condition to withstand the unusually severe winter.

From personal observation when in Southland during last month, I deem it my duty to draw the attention of the Government to this evil, which has, without doubt, not only spread to such an extent as to have seriously crippled the pastoral interest in Southland, but is slowly and surely spreading throughout Otago proper.

Where the country is well settled, and the land brought under cultivation, it is possible to keep the nuisance somewhat under control, provided there is not any bush affording them shelter; but on a great portion of the runs, which can never be anything but purely pastoral country, it has reached such an extent that I am afraid is beyond being successfully grappled with.

I may mention that on one property it is estimated that 30 men and 600 dogs are employed in the destruction of rabbits. What this means on a sheep-run needs no explanation, and a similar state of things exists on all runs where there are rabbits.

It is to be expected that, as the leases of the runs expire, the present holders will naturally relax their efforts during the last year or two of their tenure, putting the loss in carrying capacity against the expenditure required to keep the rabbits down.

The result will be that, when the time arrives for putting these tracts up for re-leasing, their value will be very seriously depreciated; and I have no hesitation in saying that many of them will be almost valueless, unless some means are devised to check the evil.

Possibly some good might be effected by offering bonuses for cheap and effective methods of rabbit destruction, either chemical or mechanical. I witnessed at the Castle Rock Station the use of bi-sulphate of carbon, which has been found very successful there; and I believe that wherever burrows in stiff clay soil exist it will be very efficacious. There is great difficulty, however, in obtaining this chemical; but I am informed that plant is now on its way, so that it may be manufactured in the colony.

Considering the interests involved, I deemed it advisable to report thus fully on the subject, rather than embody it in my letter referred to above.

I have, &c.,

B. P. BAYLY,

Chief Inspector of Sheep, Otago District.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Sheep Inspector's Office, Dunedin, 6th May, 1879.

SIR,—I have the honor to submit for your consideration the following departmental report on the different subdivisions of the Otago Sheep District, and suggesting an alteration in the present organization, which appears to me to be necessary for the proper carrying out of the provisions of "The Sheep Act, 1878," and the regulations thereunder now received.

The Southland Subdivision comprises the extreme south and west of the Otago District, and is a very extensive one to work. I estimate it to contain about 7,000 square miles of country, a large proportion of which is taken up for agricultural and pastoral purposes; and there are about 160 owners, large and small, who are scattered throughout the whole area.

Invercargill, where the Inspector resides, is the terminus of the railway, and the Bluff the first port of call for all steamers from the Australian Colonies. By these steamers, averaging one per week, stock is frequently brought, necessitating the Inspector being within reach, in order to inspect the same before landing.

This important duty interferes very seriously with his general usefulness as supervisor of his district, without a thorough knowledge of which a considerable portion of the sheep assessment will be evaded.

The most distant portions of this district will occupy, in the journey and return, from ten to fourteen days, and the Inspector having so large a district to supervise, together with a port and railway terminus requiring constant attention, is placed in such a position that he must neglect either the port or his district, and, therefore, is rendered unable to carry out the regulations under the new Act for the guidance of officers.

In order to remedy this matter I beg to recommend the appointment of an Inspector at the port of the Bluff, to act when the district Inspector is absent; such Inspector to be paid either a small annual salary, or at so much per inspection. The former plan would, I believe, be the most preferable.

The Tapanui Subdivision is about half the area of Southland. The number of owners is 176, a large proportion of whom are small owners, and, as it is a large agricultural district, the number may be anticipated to increase annually. It is a difficult district to work, as very little rail traverses the district yet, and the roads in winter are nearly impassable: last winter they were so for weeks.

The Nokomai, Tuapeka, and Switzer's Gold Fields are within this subdivision, and many of the small owners are adjacent to the mining centres, consequently the supervision of these is more expensive than the ordinary routine of duty.

The Dunstan Subdivision is entirely inland, and is very extensive, being fully as large in area as Southland, and comprises the Wakatipu, Dunstan, Mount Ida, Mount Benger, and Taieri Gold Fields. There are about 100 owners, the majority of whom are holders of large runs, there being at present comparatively few agricultural holdings.

Owing to the physical features of the country, easy travelling is rendered impossible, and the difficulties experienced in working the district are very great. There is not yet any railway, and contingent expenses are heavy owing to the distance inland, this subdivision forming a considerable portion of the north boundary of the sheep district.

The Oamaru Subdivision is about half the area of Tapanui, and contains within its boundary about 115 owners. The Inspector has very important duties to perform, having charge of a port of entry, and also the most-used boundary-crossing with the Canterbury Sheep District, both by road and rail. His constant