No. 4.

The Agent-General to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Sir,—

In continuation of my letter of the 20th [illegible]

diseases among the rabbits, I transmit to you herewith copy [illegible]

Professor C. T. Brown, and of the Agent-General of the Colony [illegible]

Council. You will also find in the Agent-General's letter [illegible]

have a fatal contagious disease among them, and [illegible]

I should rest satisfied with his opinion.

I made inquiry at the Queen Victoria Market [illegible]

of the 1st September last, and the Hon. Mr. Peacock [illegible]

Government to send over any information in my possession [illegible]

I enclose a copy of Professor Brown's Report [illegible]

like to see.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

Enclosure 1 in No. 4.

The Agent-General to C. Wesselhoeft.

Sir,—

I beg permission, on the part of the Government of New Zealand, to submit for your consideration, in the hope that the Department may be able to give me their valuable advice, upon a matter affecting the Colonists of Australasia.

You are doubtless aware that many parts of the Australasian Colonies are overrun to a very great extent by the rabbit, and that the Governments of those Colonies have been put to enormous expense in the endeavour to get rid of the pest. In some districts the rabbits have become so numerous as to render the occupation of the land unprofitable, and the settlers have been compelled to abandon their holdings. In New Zealand, although the rabbit has not yet become very numerous, it has already committed great damage in many districts, and the Government are taking every means in their power to prevent the rabbit from spreading. Large sums of money have been spent in importing ferrets, stoats, and weasels. But a question like the following has arisen, and I am directed by my Ministers to submit it to you for your consideration, and to request that you will favour me with your opinion upon it.

Would it be advisable to introduce some disease among the rabbits which should be communicated to them, and, among other suggestions, the red-mucosa of the pig has been suggested? This matter was considered by the Geological Survey in New Zealand, and he made a minute thereon, which I enclose herewith. The recent publication of your valuable report on rabbits in Victoria, and your own researches, may have brought information within your knowledge which should be much obliged if you would give my Government the benefit of your opinion.

One condition, I need hardly say, of introducing any disease, must be that it is practicable, is that there should be no danger to either man, beast, or bird, especially, of course, to man. It is necessary, in this [illegible] question, therefore, is whether such a step can be taken at all with safety, or would only attack the rabbits?

I have, &c.,

Professor C. T. Brown, Agricultural Department, Melbourne.

Enclosure 2 in No. 4.

Professor Brown to the Agent-General.

Sir,—

In reply to your letter of the 26th ultimo, referring to the Australasian Colonies, I beg to inform you that I entertain a strong objection to the use of any attempt to introduce a fatal contagious disease among rabbits for the purpose of their destruction.

In regard to swine-fever, it is undoubtedly the case that rabbits may be affected by inoculation, but there is no evidence of the communicability from rabbit to rabbit by association. The same thing may be said of tuberculosis.

The introduction of any similar form of skin-disease, such as mange or ringworm, would probably aid in the extermination of the rabbits; but both diseases are strongly contagious to other animals, and the parasite of ringworm might be transferred to man.

Under the circumstances, I am unable to suggest any measure [illegible] could be employed, as guns, traps, snares, ferrets, and the introduction of the stoat, weasel, and wesasle.

I have, &c.,

The Agent-General for New Zealand. C. T. Brown.

[Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (1,000 copies), £10.]

By Authority: George Didsbury, Government Printer, Wellington.—1887.