

1922.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEER IN NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT ON THE DAMAGE DONE BY DEER IN THE FORESTS AND PLANTATIONS IN
NEW ZEALAND.

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

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

THE seriousness of the deer question in New Zealand became evident when last year an investigation was made into the relation of grazing to the lands under the control of the State Forest Service. The results of this investigation revealed the fact that the presence of grazing animals was in most cases inimical to the development of a silvicultural policy, unless numbers were strictly controlled to a stage commensurate with forest regeneration. While it appeared that domestic stock could be controlled to this stage, it was evident that wild animals, such as deer, presented a difficult problem of control, as the only method of shifting them, when grazing had proceeded as far as was advisable, was by shooting. It was apparent that the sister industry—agriculture—was equally affected; grazing resources of many runs were being depleted, and damage to farm crops, stock, &c., was manifest.

These facts brought forth the necessity for an economic survey of deer in the Dominion to ascertain the extent of the problem and means of control. The survey has been completed, the summarized results being:—

1. Deer were introduced for sporting purposes. Importations of some 111 head, spread over the years 1861 to 1909, were made. They were released on land at that time thought worthless, some of which has later become of value to the national interests.
2. Deer have increased to large numbers, probably to some 300,000 head. They have spread over large areas of country where it is not economic they should be.
3. Excepting in few cases, deer are detrimental to the national interests:—
 - (a.) Agriculture: Large numbers of stock are displaced on stations and farms. Depletion of the resources of mountain country has occurred from their presence. Damage to stock, crops, and fences is manifest.
 - (b.) Forestry: The presence of deer is inimical to the development of silviculture. In commercial forests they must be entirely eliminated, and only allowed in small numbers in protection forests, &c.
 - (c.) Value to the public: An infinitesimal proportion of the public find sport and recreation through the deer herds. Total license fees of an average of £1,393, at £2 per license, show that 0.0005 per cent. of the population of the Dominion take part in the sport.
4. No community-value is obtained from the herds. The restrictions applied to their protection do not allow of the marketing of the carcase, and practically all meat is left to rot.
5. The herds are distributed over some millions of acres of lands in the Dominion, much of which would carry a greatly increased number of stock in their absence. All food favoured by domestic stock is eaten, and when food is in short supply deer will live where domestic stock die. Herds probably increase by 25 per cent. annually, and through absence of natural enemies, want of culling, in-breeding, or lack of adequate food for the development of horn, have degenerated to a stage where they supply little sport. Estimated damage to mountain pastures, farm crops, fences, stock, dis-