

1892.
NEW ZEALAND.

RABBIT-FENCE IN THE HURUNUI RABBIT DISTRICT

(REPORT OF MR. LAWRY ON THE).

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives, dated the 13th July, 1892.

Ordered, "That the report of Mr. Lawry re the Rabbit-fence in the Hurunui Rabbit District be laid before this House.—(Mr. HOUSTON.)"

REPORT ON THE PROPOSED RABBIT-FENCE, WAIAU RIVER.

SIR,—

Waikari, 23rd November, 1891.

I have the honour to report that I have inspected the proposed route for the line of rabbit-fence up the Waiau River, together with the country proposed to be protected by its erection. What I saw satisfied me of the necessity of erecting the fence, and without delay. The exact line the fence should take may be considered a matter of detail, still it is a matter of importance when considering the advantage a broad river offers as a first check, between a rabbit infested country and lands proposed to be protected from the incursion of rabbits by means of a fence. This is fully demonstrated by the Clarence fence, of which I shall treat at a later period.

In order, therefore, to obtain the Waiau-ua River as a first check on the rabbits on the proposed line, I recommend that the line of fence commence where Mr. W. Rutherford's fence terminates on the Montrose Run; from thence to be continued to a point, say, 8 or 10 chains above the confluence of the Hope with the Waiau River, then to cross the Hope River, then to continue up the south bank of the Waiau River until the Ada River is reached, then to follow up the western bank of the Ada, and to end in a bluff in the mountain known as the Fairy Queen.

I have decided to recommend this termination in consequence of having received reliable information that rabbits in considerable numbers have already advanced beyond the southern terminus of the Clarence fence, and that the most effectual check against their travelling further is obtainable by taking the fence up to the Fairy Queen. As you are aware, the proposal to erect the fence on the Waiau was instigated by Messrs. McArthur and D. Rutherford, and is ostensibly in their interest alone. I would, however, direct your attention to the indisputable fact that, if the rabbits are not stopped at the Waiau River, there is nothing to prevent them taking possession of the mountainous country south of the properties occupied by these two gentlemen, where the ordinary rabbitier could not reach them, and where they could not be dealt with by any ordinary method of poisoning. In fact, my inspection of the country indicated has placed the whole matter before me in an entirely new light, and matters relating to rabbits which I previously looked upon as things to be dealt with by individual effort, I now look upon as grave responsibilities which the State must accept and treat with by prompt and practical action.

After leaving the proposed Waiau line I followed the line already erected, known as the Clarence. This inspection satisfied me of the great value of a properly-constructed fence, provided care is taken to keep it in order, and also to keep the rabbits clear from a good space from its outside. In following down the Clarence line there was no evidence whatever of the existence of rabbits near the fence. This, together with the good order of the fence itself, proves the excellent work done by those whose duty it is to look after it and keep the rabbits away from the line. It is, however, questionable if this could be done by the present staff, were it not for the Clarence River, which flanks the fence for about twenty-five miles. On one or two occasions my guide took me away from the line of fence, and outside the range of caretakers. At these places I found the rabbits very numerous, and the land positively honeycombed with burrows.

Having carefully considered the whole matter, basing my considerations upon a close and practical inspection of the country, I am satisfied that, in order to prevent rabbits from taking possession of the range which forms the backbone of the Canterbury Provincial District, the Waiau fence should be erected without delay.