

The conclusions your Committee have come to are:—

1. That rabbits have undoubtedly very seriously increased in South Canterbury since the fence was erected. That they now exist in considerable numbers to the north of that fence, and require to be vigorously dealt with, or serious consequences to a large area of country in South Canterbury must result.

2. That the colony is largely interested in dealing with the rabbits in South Canterbury. Large areas of Crown runs are now affected and their value may be deteriorated, and the further spread will seriously diminish the revenue derived from the Crown lands in South Canterbury.

3. That the fencing proposed by the petitioners would only enable the settlers in part of the infested district to deal more advantageously with the pest, and that neither the settlers nor the department has been able to propose a line of fence that would check the spread of rabbits to the northwards.

4. That the Government should deal vigorously with the pest, and enforce the provisions of the Rabbit Acts; and to enable such measures to be effective, your Committee considers an increase to the staff is necessary, to insure that assistance and direction to the efforts of the settlers which can only be secured by thorough inspection and supervision.

5. That the Government should at an early date have a thorough examination made of the condition of the South Canterbury District, and as to the efficiency of the means now being taken to check the evil. A report should also be obtained as to whether a fence-line or system of fencing can be secured which will assist in checking the spread of the rabbits northwards.

21st September, 1893.

RABBIT QUESTION IN AWATERE DISTRICT.

THE question of rabbits in the Awatere District was brought before your Committee by a deputation composed of the late Chairman of the Awatere Rabbit Board and Mr. Teschemaker, a leading settler. These gentlemen made lengthy statements, which were reported. Their chief contentions were, that the Government had acted unadvisedly in doing away with the Awatere Rabbit Board; and they endeavoured to show that the administration of that Board had been satisfactory, and urged your Committee to recommend that the Awatere Rabbit Board should be again intrusted with the charge of dealing with rabbits in that district. They also urged that the system of subsidising the Awatere Rabbit Board with £1 of Government grant for each £1 raised by rabbit rates in the district should be continued.

Your Committee examined Mr. Ritchie, of the Stock Department, at considerable length as to the conduct of matters by the Board; and his evidence was also reported. Also, your Committee were informed by the Hon. the Minister of Lands that the Government were not prepared to reconstitute the Awatere Rabbit Board, or to continue the system of subsidy of £1 for £1 which had obtained in that district for the last six years.

Your Committee has to report that, after a careful review of the whole case, they are not prepared to recommend the re-establishment of the Awatere Rabbit Board. From the information given by Mr. Ritchie, your Committee think the Government is alive to the necessity for vigorous action in dealing with the pest, and should take steps to that end.

With respect to the subsidy question, your Committee found that the Board had carried out a system under which the chief part of the rates paid by the ratepayers had been assisted by the £1 for £1 Government subsidy, and expended on rabbit-fences on their properties. The evidence showed that these fences had, no doubt, assisted owners in dealing with the pest, but there was no fixed plan for common benefit, or for the fencing a line of fence for the restriction of the spread of the rabbits to other districts. Your Committee further found that engagements had been entered into between the Board and ratepayers which would absorb the funds to the credit of the Board, including the expected subsidy for the then current year, and your Committee recommend that the Government inquire into these engagements and apply the funds available to meeting them.

21st September, 1893.

THE LAND DRAINAGE BILL.

THE Joint Agricultural, Pastoral, and Live-stock Committee, to whom was referred the Land Drainage Bill for consideration, have the honour to report that they have duly considered same; and they recommend that the Bill be allowed to proceed, with the amendments as set forth on accompanying copy thereof.

22nd September, 1893.

APPLICATION of Professor LICHTWARK that the Government should assist him in Publishing his work on "The Training of the Horse."

YOUR Committee have the honour to report that this work was referred to a sub-committee to examine and report upon; and they report that they were highly impressed with the good sense, sound treatment, and humanity which the system inculcates, but that the manuscript requires careful revision before it is fit for publication.

Your Committee recommend that the Department of Agriculture make arrangements with Professor Lichtwark to publish the work in pamphlet form, which would contain a full statement of his system, and, if possible, should be accompanied by drawings showing the different positions of the operator and the horse, and a clear description of the respective straps and knots used. Such a pamphlet would be of undoubted utility, and would, your Committee think, meet the wishes of Professor Lichtwark.

Your Committee understands that Professor Lichtwark would be willing to have his work published in the form recommended, on the condition that the Government retained a fixed number of copies, and that he have the profits from, and receive for sale, such number of copies of the work as may be agreed to.

26th September, 1893.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (1,250 copies), £1 6s.

By Authority: SAMUEL COSTALL, Government Printer, Wellington.—1893.