

1856-7.

VICTORIA.

R E P O R T

FROM THE

SELECT COMMITTEE

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

UPON

LIVE STOCK IMPORTATION

TOGETHER WITH THE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE.

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 10th March, 1857.

By Authority:

JOHN FERRES, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

D.—No. 15 a.

EXTRACTED FROM THE MINUTES.

TUESDAY, 16TH DECEMBER, 1856.

LIVE STOCK IMPORTATION.—Dr. Embling moved, pursuant to notice—

- (1.) That the introduction of new and valuable stock is essential to the efficient development of the capabilities of this great country.
- (2.) That a Committee consisting of Messrs. Henty, McCulloch, Rutherford, Johnson, McDougall, the Honorable the Surveyor General, and the Mover, be appointed, empowered to take evidence, and to inquire into and report upon the best method of effecting this object, and of the animals most suitable to be beneficially introduced.

Question—put and passed.

REPORT.

The SELECT COMMITTEE of the Legislative Assembly, appointed on the 16th December, 1856, to inquire into and report upon the subject of a proposed introduction of new and valuable Live Stock, have the honor to submit to your Honorable House the following Report:—

Your Committee are of opinion, after having given the important subject referred to them their most careful consideration, that the initiation of a judicious system, by which the capabilities of this Colony, in relation to live stock, could be aided in their development, would be an act of sound policy, and one meriting the earliest and most serious attention both of the Legislature and the Government.

Victoria is reputed to possess almost the same extent of territory as that of Great Britain and Ireland; yet, some 28,000,000 acres, or nearly one-half her surface, are lying waste, idle and unoccupied, and of course yielding nothing whatever to the general revenue of the Colony.

The portion generally understood to be farmed by the tenants of the Crown, and therefore as beneficially appropriated, (that is the remainder, or some 32,000,000 acres) is but sparsely used at best, and its actual capacity for stock is neither tested by even a proximately full occupation by the ordinary stock of the Colony, nor by any efforts to ascertain its suitability as pasture ground for animals of other and valuable descriptions.

Your Committee have inquired as to the species of quadrupeds which exist in the Parent State, and they deem it worthy of remark that Great Britain only possesses, as matter of farming property, three distinct kinds: the ox, the horse, and the sheep. To which list, however, we must not omit to add the pig—the most cosmopolitan of animals, and the universal appendix to a farming establishment. None others of the various valuable animals of the world being naturalized or common in England. Perhaps the remark of Mr. McCulloch may sufficiently explain why this is so. He states—“It is questionable whether the introduction of any new quadrupeds is desirable.

“The Rocky Mountain Goat (North America), whose wool is superior in texture to the finest Cashmere, might perhaps be introduced, *but the cultivated land seems to be already sufficiently supplied with quadrupeds.*”

Your Committee think that this abundance may be fairly assigned as the reason why other valuable quadrupeds have not been sought out, and their importation into England effected. In fact the British mind appears to have been contented with their ordinary stock, and in the breeding of these up to as perfect a condition as possible. But, occupying, as Victoria does, a position so analagous to that which the parent country originally did, viz:—an absence of all indigenous useful animals; and possessing a knowledge of the steps which have, one by one enabled England to accumulate such an abundance of stock upon her lands, although the species are so limited in number, and seeing the error she has fallen into in thus neglecting to procure a greater variety of stock until it is judged not only inexpedient, but

impracticable, the land being considered too full to admit their supposed beneficial introduction, your Committee would express their opinion that advantage should be taken of the present lack of animals in Victoria, and that active measures should be resorted to to introduce not only the best of the British breeds, but also varieties of new stock from other lands, which without using more per head of the pasture of the Colony, would benefit our exports by producing new materials, and would also conduce to the development, in due time, of new branches of industry, and also to the production of many fabrics well suited to a climate so warm as that of Victoria.

There are some varieties of the British animals which your Committee would suggest as desirable additions to the present races in Victoria, and some one or two they will venture to specify—for example, the Cotswold sheep, which, long wooled, hardy, and imbued with the Leicester blood, is admirably suited to the more exposed, the poorer and wetter districts, and the coarser pastures which are hardly touched upon at present.

Like the pure new Leicester, the Cotswold, or cross breed Cotswolds have been in the old country, extensively employed for the improvement of other breeds. For fattening qualities and early maturity, combined with hardiness, fertility and size, this sheep deserves the highest consideration from the stockholders of Victoria.

The staple measure of the Cotswold wool is from six to eight inches. The fleece weighs upon a medium from seven to eight pounds, but the inferior stock averages not more than five to six pounds.

The improved Cheviots also deserve a more than passing notice: of quiet and contented temper, patient of hunger, a most excellent mother, it is most valuable upon poor lands, it matures early and produces a great weight of mutton and wool; it is ready for the market some twelve months earlier than most of its congeners, and is steadily extending itself far and wide, particularly in Scotland, where it is either assuming the place of the black-faced sheep, or, where this has not taken place, sharing the mountains between them.

The Cheviot would be well located in a district of light sandy loamy soil on limestone, or on the clearings of the mallee scrub, or in many portions of the Western Port District.

Your Committee would refer to two breeds of cattle, the Alderney and Ayrshire, as of great value to this Colony for dairy purposes. Of the cattle raised for the dairy, but few present such an affinity in conformation and habits as to be regarded as constituting "breeds" or "families." But the Ayrshire have been reared exclusively for the supply of milk, have by continued intermixture with one another, acquired such a community of character as to form a distinct, well-defined, and valuable breed. They give a large quantity of milk in proportion to their size and the meat consumed; healthy cows on good pastures giving 800 to 900 gallons per year.

The Alderneys have been long esteemed beyond those of any other race for the richness of their milk; gentle in disposition, and not of large build, they are in great demand by the more opulent classes for domestic dairies, and are largely introduced into the regular butter dairies of the south of England, the milk being viscid and rich in cream. The Alderneys would be a great acquisition to Victoria.

The black-pollé cattle which have been so successfully raised by Mr. W. M'Combie and other stock-breeders in Aberdeenshire, which feed up well when provisions are scanty; and although located on the poorer and more sterile lands, may yet be brought to market in good condition, while other stock is low in flesh,—should also be introduced into Victoria. They might be judiciously fed on the high lands of the Upper Goulburn, the Dandenong and Plenty Ranges, &c.; and would occupy much of those sterile districts now utterly unused and, with the present stock, unusable.

There are other British breeds which could be judiciously imported into Victoria, but your Committee would now advert to animals of other lands, habits, and production. Of these, the shawl goats of Asia deserve prominent attention. Extending, as the various species of the shawl goats do, over so enormous a portion of the globe, and being of so great value, it is singular how little effort has been made to introduce and domesticate it in European countries. The introduction into Great Britain and Northern Europe, and the perfect naturalization of the horse (a native of Arabia and its surrounding regions) in those colder lands was not surely a greater difficulty; yet how completely has the experiment, ages since, succeeded. And, moreover, it must not be forgotten that in ancient times the shawl goat divided the palm of utility to man with the sheep.

From the earliest period the hair or fine undercoat of this goat has been used in the manufacture of tissues or textile fabrics esteemed of the greatest value; and, indeed, the cashmere shawls still bear the palm for beauty and exquisite delicacy of texture.

In its native land, Thibet, the hair combed from this animal fetches five shillings per pound. It is a soft delicate wool which falls off in the warmer season, long and glossy, often a foot and a half in length, which trails along the ground, frequently milk white, but more generally brown, with points of a golden yellow. The French Government, with the laudable zeal they have so long displayed in promoting the prosperity of their country, have endeavored to introduce the shawl goat into France.

Some were imported, and in due course were supposed to be naturalized, when the entire experiment appeared likely to fail from the small quantity of wool (about three ounces each animal), which was found to be the average yield; but happily Mr. Polonceau, a proprietor of some Kirghiz-Thibet goats, meeting in France with some Angora goats, the length and silkiness of whose hair arrested his attention, he determined to attempt a cross of the two breeds. The result was, a goat producing on the average sixteen ounces per season, and the down thus obtained became finer and longer in the staple, and of a more silky quality. It is thus, indeed, by a judicious interbreeding of races, that animals are often produced well adapted to climates very dissimilar to those from whence the parent stocks may have been procured.

The Angora, a species of shawl goat, has been quite naturalized in France, and does not appear more tender than the common kind.

Your Committee are of opinion that the introduction, acclimatizing, and permanent naturalization of the shawl goat in this country are most worthy of liberal encouragement, as no reasonable doubt can be entertained that once established in Victoria, they would form an invaluable source of additional export.

The report presented to the late Legislative Council during the last session, on the Alpaca Llama, renders unnecessary any lengthened reference to that animal in this document.

Your Committee, however, have carefully investigated the merits of the Alpaca, and the question of recommending that its introduction should be regarded with favor, or otherwise, and they are of opinion that the Alpaca would be found suitable to the Colony, and that it would prove a *permanently valuable stock*. The Vicuña (the smaller species of Alpaca) whose wool is exceedingly fine, and more valuable than that of the Alpaca Llama itself, should be a part of the possessions of the Colony.

The Mexican sheep, which has been successfully imported into the department of the Varennes, France, should likewise be introduced here.

Without entering into a description of many others of the domesticated races, which indeed deserve more than a passing notice, and which might be most beneficially introduced into this noble country, your Committee would briefly remark upon the line of action which they would recommend to your Honorable House.

Enjoying, as Victoria does, abundant pasture for the most valuable animals of the whole world, your Committee would advise that every encouragement should be given to ensure that, as far as practicable, *each addition to the stock should be an improvement upon past importations*. It is not merely a question whether the sheep is valuable, but whether other stock, not requiring more land nor causing a greater outlay, but returning a greater profit per head, could not be made to share with the present quadrupeds, the boundless pastures of Victoria.

Your Committee would recommend that each year a supplementary estimate, of not less than £3000, be laid, by the Government, on the Table of the House, to be expended in premiums to be awarded to those who introduce valuable stock, as reported upon and recommended to the Executive by a committee (unpaid) appointed by the Government, and which should consist, in part, of members of the Assembly.

Your Committee do not think they are called upon to express any opinion respecting the amount or average amount of the premiums to be given. There are so many circumstances attendant upon the various applications that this point must, in their judgment, be referred to the committee proposed to be appointed, for, in respect of some stock, they are easy to procure, and the fact of receiving an award, however small, would be a sound guarantee of the superiority of the stock, that the pedigree was good, certificates correct, &c., and would greatly enhance that stock in value, by the character such award would confer upon it. In other cases great difficulties and possibly enormous outlay might be incurred and the flocks, imported under heavy risks, might be seriously diminished in number and but few out of a large flock of, it may be, most valuable and new animals, might be landed on our shore.

These points would require special consideration in each case; or the animals might be of a wild race, and their actual value to the Colony a question of difficulty, their utility almost wholly consisting in adding to our woods and wild scenes, herds of game, and not affecting our export power. For these and other reasons your Committee purpose to refer the question of the amounts and distribution entirely to the committee of adjudication.

The duties of this committee would be to receive applications from introducers of stock, to examine into pedigree, certificates, &c., and whether the stock be of a new and valuable description, or, if of the ordinary breeds, if the best specimens of the latest improvements of the same, and such as could be accepted as a great benefit to the Colony, and to report their decision thereupon to the Executive. A statement of the measures adopted by the Executive upon each report to be laid upon the Table of the House each session.

Your Committee would urge the importance of reserving small paddocks at each of the chief ports of the Colony, whither imported stock could be at once conveyed immediately upon their arrival, and where they could remain for a few days at a moderate cost to the owners of the same; it being found that far greater injury often accrues to stock by remaining on ship board in harbor, while preparations are being made for their removal to their final destination, than they sustain during the difficulties of a protracted voyage.

Finally your Committee are of opinion that it would be beneficial if a paddock of considerable extent was laid out, and well fenced into a few smaller portions, in a situation judiciously selected, some twenty or thirty miles from Melbourne, where experiments on new stock could be tried, their climatizing be accomplished, the stock itself increased, and thereby its permanence rendered more certain previous to its dispersion among the colonists.

Your Committee cannot conclude their Report without comment on other stock than those classified as domesticated races.

Other cattle there are unquestionably of great value which should be introduced into this Colony, and seeing how singularly favored we are, in this rich inheritance of "ample space, and room enough" to receive with the utmost facility a large tribute of the world's best possessions; your Committee think that the bush solitudes of Victoria should be invaded by some of the myriads of feathered fowl which gather in clouds in other, but not fairer lands, and that the vast nations of indigenous quadrupeds which throng over distant and less civilized scenes, should add their quota to give voice and life, activity and food, to where now, scarcely disturbed but by the cry of the laughing jackass, the almost unbroken repose of ages holds its sway over the lovely inland districts of Australia Felix.

Asia, America, Africa, and other extensive lands possess much which should find a home in this country. Africa especially, whose mysterious continent is the great nursery of many of the most noble and interesting forms that exist in the animal kingdom. Of these, mention may be made of the Quagga, the true Zebra, or wild horse of the colonists, and the striped or Bonti Quagga, all of which roam in vast herds over the level and treeless expanses of South Africa's serene and sunny plains. These magnificent animals are all capable of subjugation to bit and bridle, and some of these beautiful creatures are captured and shipped annually to the Isle of France, where they are not uncommonly driven in harness.

The Quagga averages from twelve to thirteen hands high, is compact, strong, and muscular, with clear bony limbs, has a foot which might serve as a model, and is of a form perfectly symmetrical. His gentle disposition, combined with high courage and swiftness of speed, which has indeed been traditioned in the most sacred of books, fully justifies M. Cuvier's remark—"That this species is capable of highly beneficial services in a domesticated state. We may be naturally surprised that the Quagga has been suffered to retain its liberty so long. Naturalists now, however, have discovered the pliability of its disposition in conjunction with its physical powers; and practical men will probably in time take advantage of the discovery by adding the Quagga to the number of species subdued to the general profit, convenience, and pleasure of mankind."

These remarks bear with equal force upon the Zebra and Bonti Quagga.

It is not improbable, seeing that Victoria enjoys a climate so strictly alike to that of South Africa, that these beautiful animals might, in some respects, surpass even the horse in value, or, at any rate, that a cross of the two species would embody in an exalted form the better qualities of both.

The Pheasant and Partridge have as yet no home in Australia Felix, and the Arboreal Curassow of Mexico and South America, which has been so long reduced to the tameness of domestic poultry, which exceeds in size and beauty the English Pheasant, and which also excels in flavor the delicacy of its flesh, yet remains unknown among us. Over the measureless landscapes of Africa, however, the graceful free born game of the desert bounds in light and liberty, and there can be no reason why that rich mine of animal existence should not yield some of its most treasured wealth to store up in the wild lands of this country. Myriads might congregate on our uncultured sylvan scenes; there are the multitudinous varieties of Deer, the Antelope, and the graceful Gazelle, the ponderous Eland, the massive Gnoo, the Oryx, the regal Koodoo, the Buffalo, &c.

These and many others might be brought to this fertile shore without invading the pasture grounds of the domestic breeds, or even trenching on the liberty of a single sheep, and which would materially benefit the Colony, while they would rapidly multiply in a land the counterpart of their native haunts, and where especially no beast of prey lies in wait to hunt or destroy them.

Your Committee in conclusion would remark that they do not think they have travelled beyond the record in entering upon the consideration of the propriety of introducing many of the wild races as well as the domestic stock into Victoria.

The land is comparatively destitute of animals, and an opportunity exists of gathering from every region its most valuable stock, and making this country the unquestioned richest possessor of the richest of the gifts of the entire globe,

In reference to the wild animals, doubtless the various British and Colonial Governments could easily reciprocate acts of mutual good will, and thus benefit the various lands where they hold authority, a course of action which your Committee would respectfully submit is not inconsistent with high official dignity; but in the case of private enterprise introducing valuable game, it is recommended that applications for premiums should hold good, as well as in the case of domestic animals.

(Signed)

THOS. EMBLING,

Chairman.

PROCEEDINGS OF COMMITTEE.

THURSDAY, 8TH JANUARY, 1857.

Members present :—

Dr. Embling.

No Quorum.

Adjourned to Tuesday next, at twelve o'clock.

TUESDAY, 13TH JANUARY, 1857.

Members present :—

Dr. Embling, Mr. Henty, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Rutherford, Mr. McCulloch.

Dr. Embling was called to the Chair.

A preliminary discussion of the question ensued.

Adjourned *sine die*.

TUESDAY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 1857.

Members present :—

Dr. Embling, Mr. McCulloch.

No Quorum.

Adjourned to Tuesday, the 10th instant, at three o'clock.

TUESDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 1857.

Members present :—

Mr. McDougall.

No Quorum.

Adjourned to Tuesday, the 17th instant, at twelve o'clock.

TUESDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY, 1857.

Members present :—

Dr. Embling.

No Quorum.

Adjourned to Thursday next, at three o'clock.

THURSDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY, 1857.

Members present :—

Dr. Embling in the Chair.

Mr. McDougall, Mr. Henty.

The subject of the introduction of various animals suited to the character and climate of the country was discussed, preparatory to bringing up the Draft Report.

Adjourned to Thursday next, at three o'clock.

THURSDAY, 26TH FEBRUARY, 1857.

Members present :—

Dr. Embling in the Chair.

Mr. McDougall, Mr. McCulloch, Mr. Henty.

Portions of the Draft Report were read and considered.

Adjourned to Tuesday, 10th March, at three o'clock.

TUESDAY, 10TH MARCH, 1857.

Members present :—

Dr. Embling in the Chair.

Mr. McDougall, Mr. Rutherford.

Draft Report further considered and adopted.

Chairman ordered to Report.