

Rabbit, Once Outlaw, King In Australia

\$6,250,000 Bunny Pool Formed to Export Meat to Starving Europeans—Fur Worth \$5,000,000 Annually

By Robert Sumner Winn

An Australian rabbit "pool" The war is accountable for many queer things, but of all of them this is, perhaps, the queerest. Ask any Australian sheep man or farmer his opinion of the rabbit, and if his loathing of the long-eared rodent is not too deep for utterance his reply is sure to be peppered with epithets or bad words.

The rabbit is a curse in the great southern continent, a curse with qualifications to the tune of several million dollars. Incidentally these qualifications concern the United States, for Antipodean rabbit fur is essential for hat making in our country and it commands higher prices than it did.

Because Australians have gone to the war in numbers he is meekly and insatiably wracking himself upon the country to a greater extent than ever.

When he began to plague the new Commonwealth, a generation or more ago, thanks to his importance, the Englishman who liked "dear little rabbits about" all that was bound to him was to pay a bounty of 12 cents apiece for his scalp.

The next stage was legislation against him, resulting in the importation of thousands of miles of wire netting to prevent him from spreading himself all over the map. This was a business by which German iron manufacturers, along with American and British concerns, profited considerably.

By 1914, whereas many rural Australians had suffered sorely or been mulcted much in the aggregate by reason of "Burr Rabbits" for legally he is an outlaw and allowing him to propagate and nibble his way through the fields—many other Australians were making a livelihood out of him by trapping him; a few were waxing rich upon him by refrigering and canning him, and, as just said, foreign wire netting makers were extracting not a little advantage from his fecundity and voracity.

Therein was something of an economic oddity. Although the stric governments of Australia were suppressing "Burr" as far as it lies upon human property, they were, by having him poisoned and otherwise slain out of hand, and they were killing them, these same governments were maintaining refrigerating plants and wharf facilities either in competition with, or in aid of, private interests engaged in converting him into food.

It was paying the governments; and, speaking of paying, the interests, there by the million annually; and there were the big steamship companies, which conveyed him frozen in crates or tinned in tin for overseas to Newland.

There and a half years ago it was as true as it is now that gastronomically "Burr" is not to be despised. Fricassee is a word in a recipe, he is deemed pretty fashionable even in Australia, where he is hated most; under certain conditions he can be palmed off on the palate as chicken, and the supply of him is incalculable. And then there is his adaptability, next after his edibility, for headgear.

—were to be shipped in crates of not less than sixty pounds weight each. The Commonwealth Bank entered into an agreement with the banks in the four rabbit exporting states—New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania—to share the business with them according to their resources.

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RATES HIGH AS WAR COMMODITY If Australia was not long in realizing the calories for warfare inherent in every rabbit, the British government would not have been so quick.

Ship Shortage Causes Crisis All went well for a time, and then the death of tonnage with which Australia was faced upset matters.

Fur a Gold Mine By virtue of all this the exporters received the 75 per cent advance already referred to, totalling about \$2,000,000.

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