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Mickey taken out of mouse reports

By SIMON KILROY

STORIES of marauding Mana Island mice have been blown out of proportion, Conservation Minister Philip Woollaston assured Parliament yesterday.

Porirua MP Graham Kelly had seen reports in Time magazine of mice problems on Mana and was concerned at the menace lurking on the doorstep of his electorate.

He asked Mr Woollaston if the reports were accurate.

Perhaps looking for a silver lining in the infestation, he also asked if there would be a special eradication grant to develop a mousetrap industry in Porirua.

Unfortunately for the prospects of the mousetrap industry, Mr Kelly was rapidly assured the reports were not only inaccurate but also highly coloured.

"Mice are a problem on the island but not on the biblical scale imagined by Time, which claim 15 million of them are on the rampage," Mr Woollaston said.

While the mice could eat insects and birds' eggs, they could not eat lizards and birds as the reports had claimed.

The mice lived mainly off imported grass seeds, but because they were not compatible with other life on the island they were being eliminated.

"But I'm very happy to assure the member that his electorate is not in danger of a massive invasion of amphibious, carniverous mice."

A grant for mousetrap industry establishment was, as a consequence, not on.