

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2012

### LIVESTOCK (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 3 May 2012.)

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:47):** I rise to indicate today that the Liberal Party will be supporting the Livestock (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2012 in its amended form, as received from the Legislative Council. I will indicate that we will not be supporting the government's first amendment. I have mentioned my farming history many times in this place, but I think I need to at the start of this speech as well. From 1840 to 2005, when I leased out my property, we managed stock for all those years on different properties.

In my lifetime, my father ran a commercial Hereford herd. He had up to 100 breeders at one stage, and was very successful at selling commercial bulls into the local area and beyond. Apart from that, we have had merinos on board, as well as breeding with Polwarth sheep, so we have had a little bit to do with stock over time. Apart from having the odd horse on the property—thankfully, I have boys, and they like motorbikes; you do not have to feed them when they are not being used. Certainly, I would think we have had a reasonable amount of experience.

Livestock contributes to the South Australian economy somewhere between \$4 billion and \$5 billion annually, so it is significant. I note that there are certainly clauses in this bill that will improve the operation of the Livestock Act 1997. This bill lines up under the act. Under national agreements, the act already ensures South Australia is in line with livestock legislation enacted in other states and territories in Australia by supporting a number of important national agreements, including the National Livestock Identification Scheme (commonly known as NLIS) and the national agreements for funding of emergency responses to exotic disease incursions. Certainly registration requirements are part of this plan.

Obviously disease is a major concern amongst the state's livestock industries and it does not just reflect on Bovine Johne's disease or Ovine Johne's disease. The act does provide for registration requirements that ensure that the minimum necessary standards are adhered to for the protection and benefit of our livestock industries in this state.

With registration these requirements allow for fast and effective tracing of livestock in the event of detecting an animal disease emergency, certainly in relation to

artificial breeding centres and veterinarian diagnostic laboratories. The current act provides the government with the ability to investigate and control any animal disease or contaminant that may impact on the health of livestock, people, and native or feral animals. It also provides the government with the opportunity to explore the marketability of livestock or livestock products.

The current act from 1997 provides for the establishment of livestock advisory groups. We have seven advisory groups at the moment: sheep, cattle, pigs, goat, deer, alpacas and horses. These groups are there to give advice to the government with regard to policy in their particular industries. Funds for these advisory groups are established under the Primary Industry Funding Schemes Act 1998.

Obviously this bill is to upgrade the act to include provisions that will give the owners of livestock and industry communities a greater voice in how animal health-related diseases and issues are handled and ultimately dealt with. There is an important amendment to the act, which is in the bill, to enable recovery of costs from individuals who refuse or fail to take required control actions in the event of animal disease detection. This is aimed not solely at the apiary sector, but certainly it does have a lot of issues, where in the past a large amount of taxpayer and industry funds have been used to clean up neglected and abandoned hives and hive material.

With the introduction of property identification codes (not without a little bit of controversy throughout the countryside) the PIC fee has been introduced as a component of the NLIS and provides information about livestock properties for use in disease emergencies and natural disasters. Specific provisions for all properties with livestock have been developed to provide more equitable penalties. Hopefully this will improve the current property identification code system. If this bill goes through and becomes an act I understand it will bring the PIC fee from being under regulation to becoming part of this legislation.

I note that when this bill was introduced there was a lot more controversy about biosecurity fees that were going to be put in with this bill, because this is the act that has to be opened if more biosecurity fees are going to be placed on our state's producers and horse owners. The government has decided to pull those biosecurity fees. This side of the house has successfully asked for an investigation within the Environment, Resources and Development Committee and we hope that will achieve the appropriate outcome.

One thing that is always voiced to me from farmers is, 'How much more are we going to be hit up for?' Cost recovery, biosecurity fees—these people supply billions and billions of dollars to this state's economy and the government is pretty keen to salute what our grain growers and property owners grow but then they go and talk about more fees and more imposts. It will be interesting to see where the proposal for more biosecurity fees gets to in the future.

I want to talk about the amendment moved in the other place by the Hon. Robert Brokenshire, and it relates to bringing in cases of animal welfare on a commercial livestock scale, and involving horses as well, under Primary Industries. On this side of the house we think that is a good move. We cannot see why you should expect a charity that gets \$650,000 annual government funding to run the operation in regard to the inspectorate for animal welfare cases for commercial livestock or horses.

We think the RSPCA is better off looking after wild animals and pets as their inspectorate job, and that will create a better outcome for our producers. We think it is too much of a load, and we think the government should take more of a hand in it. I know that Primary Industries do support agriculture, they do promote it, but I cannot see any reason why their animal welfare officers, their inspectors, through their chief inspectors and the chief veterinary surgeon, cannot use the amendment of the Hon. Robert Brokenshire in the other place to look after the welfare of stock. These inspectors are already in place around the state at saleyards and other locations, so I believe they will give the best outcome for animal welfare on a commercial scale, involving horses, in this state.

I want to mention a case that had quite a lot of notoriety, the case that did not happen, against Tom and Patricia Brinkworth, who have properties in the South-East. I will tell the house that my father, although not a close friend, has known the Brinkworths for many years. When my father and his father had land in the Gawler region, he knew Tom Brinkworth when he was ran a pig property in that region; so, I just put that out there for the house's information. There were certainly different points of view. Some people were saying that the Brinkworths had huge animal welfare issues. Fellow farmers made that case and others—

Mrs Geraghty interjecting:

**Mr PEDERICK:** I can talk about who I like. The other side of this argument is that, when this all fell apart because of a botched investigation by the RSPCA, costing the operations manager his job because of a flawed application process for a warrant, Tom and Pat Brinkworth were unable to put their case. I just want to put that out there. It is pretty easy for people to make allegations about anything, and I am talking about any issue at all. It is pretty easy—

Mrs Geraghty interjecting:

**Mr PEDERICK:** No, no; everyone over there can have their go. It is pretty easy for people to make allegations. The Brinkworths could not even defend themselves in court; so they have never been able to make their case. I am just making the point. There are always at least two sides to an argument, and sometimes there are more than two. The operations manager by his own volition (and I will give him credit for that) decided that he needed to confess that he had altered the paperwork in

regards to the application for search warrants. If he had not done that this may have gone through, or it may have been found by legal means, who knows.

Certainly, it was a bad outcome for everyone. The RSPCA was badly smeared and they got a bad reputation out of it. It cost their operations manager his job and it also smeared Tom and Patricia Brinkworth. In line with the RSPCA campaign in recent days, campaigning for members of parliament to vote against the Brokenshire amendment, I want to quote from some correspondence to our party, the response I gave and then a further response I got from a constituent. This person lives in the electorate of Waite so he was writing to the member for Waite, Martin Hamilton-Smith. I quote:

Dear Martin,

As a constituent of Waite I am contacting you about a proposal by Robert Brokenshire MLC to amend the Livestock Act, which would transfer the RSPCA's power to protect livestock and horses to the department of primary industries and resources (PIRSA)—

it is actually the Department of Primary Industries and Regions now, but I digress. It continues:

I am concerned that asking any organisation to both promote and police the same industry would create an untenable conflict of interest. I believe the power to investigate and prosecute alleged cruelty must be held by a completely independent body. I am convinced the best option is to allow the RSPCA to continue its great work in this area. Therefore, I am calling on you to oppose Mr Brokenshire's amendment. I trust you will consider these concerns most seriously and I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely, Tony Box.

On behalf of my office, my trainee, Kaitlin, responded to Mr Box in this way:

Dear Mr Tony Box,

On behalf of Mr Adrian Pederick MP JP, I would like to thank you for your email concerning the Livestock (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2012. As Mr Pederick is the shadow minister for agriculture and a farmer, this is an issue he has watched for its entirety.

The South Australian Liberal Party believes the Department of Primary Industries and Regions [South Australia] (PIRSA) is in the best position to manage animal welfare

issues with regards to commercial livestock and horses, but we are also of the belief the RSPCA are best suited to dealing with pets and native animal welfare issues.

The Livestock (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2012 will improve the current operation of the Livestock Act 1997 and will bring the current act up-to-date to manage the health of commercial livestock in South Australia.

Once again thank you for your email. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact Mr Pederick or the Hammond electoral office.

Kind regards, Kaitlin.

We get a further email reply from Mr Box. It says:

Dear Miss Kaitlin...

Thank you for your vacuous reply.

(1) 'Pederick is the shadow minister for agriculture and a farmer, this is an issue he has watched for its entirety'. So what! BFD.

I think members can all work out what that is. It continues:

If Pederick is a farmer then knowing that creates immediate distrust of his motives. Farmers rank the same as politicians on the totem pole of integrity, etc—

and I will come back to that. You might be surprised, member for Torrens, that I will come back to that. It continues:

(2) 'best position to manage animal welfare issues with regards to commercial livestock and horses'. If you can convince me that PIRSA would have gained a successful prosecution leading to jail time for farmers, Thomas and Patricia Brinkworth (a notable failure by the RSPCA, but I suspect bribery), then I'll accept your assertion which is otherwise meaningless.

(3) 'Livestock (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2012 will improve the current operation of the Livestock Act 1997'. How will it improve the current operation of the Livestock Act? Just an assertion and yet Pederick has watched this for its entirety yet can't succinctly and cogently explain why it's an improvement.

(4) 'to manage the health of commercial livestock in South Australia'. This is a concern. Livestock health is important economically but you've forgotten welfare.

I think you need more training before you respond to your boss' emails.

Regards, Tony Box.

I find that not so much an interesting reply but quite a disgraceful response. I rang my trainee and I said, 'Look, don't worry about it. No more response to that constituent.' However, I do take offence to where it says:

If Pederick is a farmer then knowing that creates immediate distrust of his motives . Farmers rank the same as politicians on the totem pole of integrity etc.

As a farmer and now as a politician in this place I can accept—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** You've got two strikes.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Yes, two strikes. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. As a politician, I will take all the grenades. Throw the bombs, throw whatever, because we get it on all sides—whether you are Liberal, Labor, Green or an Independent, politicians are easy targets, and so it is. I do not think that we should be such easy targets because I think that there are many people in this place on all sides who do work hard. You have to work hard to retain your seat.

I do struggle with people always knocking the integrity of politicians. I really take great offence to someone who, because they believe politicians are in such a low place (and I am using their words), believe that farmers have got that same level of integrity, according to them, and I think that is absolutely disgusting and disgraceful. In relation to some of these people who write in, what I can say to the RSPCA is that if you have got friends like this you do not need enemies.

This is absolutely disgraceful, not just to comment on politicians but to comment on the food producers of this state. People then wonder why the food producers of this state start to arc up, get angry and stand up for themselves because they are sick of all this carry-on. You have people who do not want food produced: they want to reduce populations with some archaic policies. Farmers are working with the best, most modern, up-to-date equipment—and I note that out in my area they are seeding at the moment in very dry soil—so they can feed people not just in this state but feed people around the world, and to cop this abuse, well, I just treat it with the absolute disdain that it deserves.

People need to understand that their meat does not turn up in a cryovac pack in any of the supermarkets or in the local butcher, or milk just does not turn up in a carton. It is produced by the many thousands of hard-working farmers and their staff and families across this state so that we can feed everyone. If there are people out there who reckon they can live on thin air, well, good luck, because you are not going to last long, and if you want to bag farmers, you go out and live on thin air for a while and we will not need to worry about feeding you, anyway.

An honourable member interjecting:

**Mr PEDERICK:** No, I read from the letter; it is right there. People need to understand—

Members interjecting:

**Mr PEDERICK:** No, I am going to defend our profession. I am going to defend it.

**The Hon. P. CAICA:** You don't need to do it here.

**Mr PEDERICK:** No; that is fine. People need to be aware on all counts about the contribution that people involved in primary industries make to this state. I notice one clause—and we will get to it during committee—fixes the issue about artificial insemination. I think that it was only supposed to be operated by a veterinarian, but I can tell members—and this was something that was brought up in the briefing—that this is something that needs to be fixed, and it certainly does. People have been doing their own artificial insemination probably since the act came in and probably before.

Quite often I go to my local store at Coomandook and one of my local farmers has a box of pig semen that has turned up in the mail. The farmer and his wife happily go out to do their pig mating. Technically they are contravening the act, so I am glad that is getting tidied up if this goes through this house and then gets back through the other place.

With those few words, I want to indicate that we are supporting the bill in its amended form from the upper house, and certainly supporting the amendment put by the Hon. Robert Brokenshire in regard to bringing animal welfare issues in under PIRSA from the RSPCA. I commend the bill.