

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Animal Welfare) Amendment Bill

June 3rd, 2008

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (17:36): I also rise today to make a contribution to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Animal Welfare) Amendment Bill 2007. I lay on the record that members of my family have been farming in this state since they came here in 1840, and they were farming in England before that, so we have had a fair bit to do with the handling of animals over that period of time, whether they be sheep, cattle or horses (when they were used in former times for traction). In my own life I have been heavily involved in the wool industry, whether for breeding stock or shearing sheep (I trod the boards for 13 or 14 years), and also helped run a commercial Poll Hereford herd on my family farm. From a very young age we were assisting stock that might have gone down or cattle that had trouble calving.

The last thing a farmer wants to see is stock in any distress at all. I can remember on more than one occasion, as a 10 or 12 year old, assisting in pulling calves out of cattle that were having trouble calving, and doing what we could to keep both cow and calf alive. That is something that is uppermost in a producer's mind, because the last thing they want is to have injured or dead stock.

The wool industry has been a major component of this country's economy since the late 1700s. It was once said that 'we rode on the sheep's back' but, sadly, that industry has died off to a degree. I guess other commodities industries are becoming more important, with the mining boom, etc., taking over. However, the wool industry has been a major component of our history.

I, too, want to make some comments about mulesing. Millions of sheep would have died unnecessarily over time if this practice had not been used to prevent blowfly strike on the tail of sheep. From experience, I can tell members that there is nothing like shearing a sheep that is flyblown from tail to head; it is an absolutely disgusting thing to have to do. It is disgusting for anyone having to handle wool that is full of maggots. With any luck, the sheep may survive with a treatment of Fly Strike, either as a powder or as a liquid. However, if the sheep are that far gone, they are just about finished.

I commend Australian Wool International for looking at various alternatives so that we can get rid of the practice of mulesing. Practices such as the clips to go on the tail of an animal may be effective, but they need to be proven. I know we have pressure from groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and others. I think the industry is doing what it can to move forward and find other ways to protect sheep and keep them alive.

Something that has been mentioned by other members today is the practice of tailing lambs, whether by the use of elastrator rings or a gas hot knife, which are quite humane practices. As with mulesing, these animal husbandry practices are the best way for farmers to get on with the job of running their sheep.

As has been mentioned by other members, there is a prevalence of chicken farms (there are quite a few in the Hammond electorate) and there is a potential for many more intensive chicken properties. We have seen the expansion of the pig industry, not just in my area but right throughout the state. In relation to the Primo Abattoir in the member for Goyder's electorate, it is good to see that the people who were working there were able to get jobs at a couple of abattoirs down in Hammond after the fire they had up there recently. Let us hope that that abattoir is under way 100 per cent in the very near future.

Pig breeding obviously still involves the use of farrowing crates to breed. Anyone who has seen a sow have piglets without these crates, where the sow rolls over and kills most of the little ones, would know that that is not a very sustainable practice. I think that eco-shelters are a major innovation in pig farming. You could probably run up to 100 or so pigs in an eco-shelter, and this has been around for a little while now. You have your automatic feeders and your automatic waterers, and I think that is a great way to grow pigs out from little pigs until it is time to go to market.

On the subject of going to market, freighting stock is obviously something that some people get anxious about. I notice that the freight industry for stock does have exemptions in

respect of hours that drivers can drive so that they can get their stock to wherever they are going, whether it is to another property or to market, in the quickest possible time and in a respectable manner so that the stock is presented in good condition.

Farmers and others do not want to see stock in a deplorable state on these trucks. They go through the practice in the yards of emptying out as much as possible all the urine, etc., and loading the stock onto the trucks and delivering them safely, whether they are being delivered to another property or to a saleyard. This practice has been going on for a long time, and I believe that, for the most part, it is done in a very workmanlike manner. As part of freighting stock, electric prodders have to be used at times. As I have mentioned in this place before, if anyone has tried to load four decks of old ewes—

Mr Venning interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes; you need a lot of good dogs. It can get very trying, and sometimes you have to give one or two a little help up onto the truck. Prodders have certainly been used in the cattle industry. Obviously, they are not to be used just because you have it in your hand, but sometimes they are needed in loading stock.

In conclusion, I want to talk a little about the Calgary Stampede, which I know the member for Stuart and probably others in this place have attended. I was at that event 24 years ago and know how impressive it was even back then to see how they put on that rodeo show in Canada. When the D9 bulldozers are not being used in the rodeo ring, they are dragging the stage out on to the ring. I am sure they do things in a bigger and better way there. I believe that anyone involved with animal husbandry in the rodeo industry does things in a sustainable way, because they know as well as anyone that people are watching and they need to make sure they do it right, as I believe they do.

One thing we do have to be careful about as a state and a nation is that, if people are going to get so agitated about how we run our livestock, whether it involve piggeries, chicken sheds or how we run our sheep and cattle (either paddock run or intensively), we do not make it so hard that we run the risk that people will not want to produce, because we may end up having to import food from people who have no safe practices.

It will be full of stuff and you will have no idea what is going on, what these stock have been grazing on, how they have been run and how they have been handled, and that is the risk that we run if people want to get down on producers that hard that they make it unviable to produce stock in this country.

We have had a great record of producing stock; we have had a live sheep and live cattle trade that has transported hundreds of millions of dollars worth of stock overseas, and currently we have many people working overseas making sure that people who receive the stock at the other end handle them in the best way possible. Yes, there does need to be constant education in that practice, but it is just the way we have to deal with some countries' religious beliefs. Just in closing, let us just be careful how we handle this debate, because otherwise we will kill off major industry.