

**PORK INDUSTRY – 28 Oct 2010**  
**Motion on Coles pork gestation stalls ban**

**Mr PICCOLO (Light) (12:18):** By leave, I move my motion in an amended form:

*That this house*

1. Notes—

- a) *the importance to continually improve animal husbandry practices to ensure the practical welfare of animals;*
- b) *the work being undertaken by the pork industry in Australia to phase out, as far is practical, the use of gestation stalls in the management of sows;*
- c) *the research being co-ordinated by the Pork Cooperative Research Centre (located at the Roseworthy Campus of the University of Adelaide) to ensure changes in sow and pig management are based on sound scientific evidence;*
- d) *that local pig producers acknowledge the participation of Woolworths in research to promote good animal husbandry practice;*
- e) *the unilateral decision made by Coles Supermarkets not to purchase pork from Australian farmers who have not completely phased out gestation stalls by 2014;*
- f) *the refusal by Coles Supermarkets to apply its decision to the producers and suppliers of imported pork; and*
- g) *the failure by Coles Supermarkets to properly consult with local pig producers.*

2. *Expresses its concern that the decision by Coles Supermarkets could have a significant negative impact on the Australian Pork Industry with no net benefit for animal welfare.*

3. *Calls on Coles Supermarkets—*

- a) *to apply the same welfare standard to all its pork products;*
- b) *to invest in research that will lead to improvement in animal husbandry practices;*
- c) *to work alongside the Australian pork industry to achieve better universal animal welfare outcomes without having a significant adverse impact on the industry; and*
- d) *to support rural and regional communities by investing in research that will improve animal husbandry practices and the productivity of the animal related industries.*

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:29):** I wish to move an amendment to the motion as follows:

To add the following paragraph to the motion:

4. **Calls on the federal government for full and prompt national implementation of the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals—Pigs, as approved by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council on 20 April 2007.**

It is not often in this place that I agree with the member for Light. There must be some love or something else in the air today. This motion recognises the true importance of animal welfare across the globe, and not trying to pick a sector, state or country above another is absolutely the right move.

I would like to discuss what Coles has done here. They have made an announcement that by 2014 they will stop buying fresh pork from producers who use sow stalls, and their ban will not apply to processed pork products, such as ham and

bacon imported from overseas. Certainly, South Australian producers believe this will place them in an uncompetitive position and jeopardise the Australian pig industry. It is common knowledge that pregnant sows are placed in sow stalls to prevent them fighting each other, which is a natural tendency that often results in abortion and, therefore, lost production.

It is also worth noting that farrowing crates are used in the pig industry—for the survival of piglets, mainly, because, if they are not used, they run a high risk of death and very low litter rates in the breeding of pigs. The industry is telling us that up to 80 per cent of ham and bacon consumed in Australia is imported, much of it from Denmark, Canada and the United States, where gestation stalls exist and producers also enjoy subsidised farming systems.

Coles makes the grand claim that this move is motivated by animal welfare concerns. They decline to disclose how much pork they import and claim double-digit sales growth since the announcement. I agree with the member for Light that this is about perception and people feeling good when buying pork products from Coles, when most of it is imported product when Coles can get hold of it. The only reason they might not be purchasing it at present is that there is a ban, and I agree that as soon as that ban is lifted they will be straight back in the market bringing in imported product.

Coles also makes the claim that their decision followed consultation with South Australian pig farmers who, they say, supported the move. The problem is that Australian fresh pork producers will incur considerably greater production costs through increased infrastructure costs or through foetus losses if this move is brought forward by Coles without being brought forward across not just this state but also across this country and internationally.

Australian Pork Limited estimates that Australian farmers could pay between \$400 to \$900 per sow to phase out sow stalls. Most pig farmers support the general intent behind the decision and would accept it if it applied to all pork products sold in Australia, imported or locally grown. They object to being forced to adopt practices that will make them uncompetitive against overseas producers. Coles' consultation has been a little like Labor's and has been described as more like, 'This is how it's going to be,' and no real choice was offered. There is very little export of Australian pork. Other countries who export do not, in the main, import products that they produce.

Some countries that claim not to use sow stalls actually use them for four to six weeks through the most critical period of a sow's pregnancy rather than risk production levels. They are seen to be doing the right thing, but only up to a point. This is the other point about deception that I mentioned earlier. It is felt that most Australian producers would happily adopt this practice.

While Coles claims that animal welfare is the driver of this decision, it appears more commercial than altruistic. The move is seen by many as an attempt to catch up to Woollies, which grabbed a niche market share months before with a similar demand on some growers. If Coles were truly concerned about animal welfare it would acknowledge that all pork-based smallgoods are made from fresh pork wherever it is grown, whether it is pigs from Denmark, USA or Canada (from where almost all our pork imports emanate), and should be entitled to the same consideration, in which case Coles should apply the same demands on processed

pork imports. It would certainly be ironic if we had to finish up trying to import fresh pork from countries using sow stalls.

It is interesting to note that in April 2006 the Primary Industries Ministerial Council endorsed a revised Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals—Pigs, which was developed by a panel of experts including industry, government, animal welfare groups and the RSPCA and was acceptable to all. Changes were to be phased in over three, five and 10 years from then. South Australia adopted the code immediately but not all states followed suit. As a consequence, not all South Australian producers have embraced the changes or the timetable because they need to wait until all other states implement the same code, otherwise South Australian producers will be at a competitive disadvantage not only with internationally grown pork but with pork grown in other states. That is why I have moved the amendment.

Given that industry guidelines exist within this code, it is necessary for the federal government to insist on all states adopting the code promptly. This requirement for national adoption would be a far more reasonable and effective broad solution than using the blunt instrument of retailer imposed discriminatory bans. All growers are just asking for a level farmyard or playing field. The vast majority of farmers, whether farming pigs, sheep, cattle or other livestock, do the right thing, but there is always the odd one that does not. Certainly in the pig industry hygiene is absolutely paramount in order to prevent disease, and the care of sows is paramount so that they get optimal litter size.

I note also the expansion of using eco-shelters, where many pigs can be kept in units and have free-range to move around to their feed, water and sleeping shelters. People are making the right moves, but we need to do this not just in this state but right across the country and across the world. This is all about perception. Putting a ban on one group of farmers, crippling our own local farmers, to make it look like you are doing the right thing is completely wrong. In closing my remarks, I note the motion from the member for Light. The Liberal Party will support the amended motion and I seek the support of the house.

*Amendment carried; motion as amended carried.*