**SWINE COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1960**

**House of Assembly, 3 May 1960, pages 374-6**

Second reading

**The Hon. D. N. BBOOKMAN (Minister of Agriculture)** obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Swine Compensation Act, 1936-1954. Read a first time.

The Hon. D. N. BBOOKMAN—I move—

*That this Bill ~be now read a second time.* This Bill is required to deal with infectious rhinitis disease of swine and, in order to give the House the full information on this subject, I will speak in somewhat greater detail than might usually be warranted. The reason for the existence of the Swine Compensation Act is that pig owners may be compensated when their pigs have to be destroyed on the order of the authorities. The funds collected under this Act are derived from a stamp duty on all sales of swine excepting store pigs and studs sold by private treaty. The rate of collection is 1 ½ d. in the pound. The owners are compensated for pigs ordered to be slaughtered up to a maximum of £30 per animal. The fund at June 30, 1959, stood at £92.566. Expenditure authorized in this Bill as a debit against the funds is about £1,500 to date.

There are a number of diseases which are present in the State and are practically ineradicable. The policy of the department, in the event of an outbreak, is to order slaughter with compensation where necessary and to control movement of pigs from the herd. The diseases definition in the Act covers a number of ailments which have appeared in South Australia, and from which advantage to the industry is derived by the above actions. This policy is widely supported by pig owners of the State.

The list of diseases is as follows:—tuberculosis, swine fever, infectious pneumonia of swine (including swine plague), swine dysentery, swine erysipelas, and swine paratyphoid (necrotic enteritis). I am moving to add to this list infectious rhinitis, and also to provide that the Governor may by proclamation include other ailments in the disease definition. I shall describe the circumstances leading to this Bill. In November, 1959 a disease of pigs in which sneezing and nasal discharge were present was reported. On November 10 a stock inspector examined the piggery and reported unusual features, including sneezing and nasal discharge. The next day a departmental veterinary officer visited the piggery and suspected rhinitis. The Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science studied specimens and supported the diagnosis. However, to be quite sure, specimens were flown to England to the Veterinary laboratories at Weybridge, England. Subsequently the diagnosis was confirmed from England. The disease had never been known in Australia before. The Government was faced with a difficult position. Power to order destruction of diseased pigs exists in the Stock Diseases Act. Compensation is not payable under that Act. In fairness to owners and to ensure their full co-operation, it is desirable to pay compensation. As rhinitis is not specified in the Swine Compensation Act the fund which exists for this type of compensation could not be used. As a matter of fact it could be debated that the fund could be used as the disease could be called a form of pneumonia. Parliament was not sitting at the time and there existed no machinery for including the disease in the Swine Compensation Act.

The Government decided that the urgency of the situation demanded the use of Treasury funds, and it was decided to approach Parliament. at an early date to seek inclusion in the Swine Compensation Act. I believe that the- Greek word “rhinos” means “nose” and “itis” means “inflammation” so inflammation of the nose is really all that is specified by “rhinitis”. Swift measures to contain the disease were undertaken, but as fast as properties were visited more outbreaks were located. Methods of swift diagnosis so urgently needed are not, available anywhere. The Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science is at present working on this problem. The position was that about 150 properties were under quarantine and there is evidence of much wider contact with the disease. We have called conferences of interstate and Commonwealth health authorities. The first was held on December 15 last and the latest on April 6. The conclusion, which now seems wise, was that the quarantine policy should be modified and that future control measures be similar to that of other diseases, such as most of those mentioned in the Swine Compensation Act. It must be recognized that the infection is ineradicable. The position is not greatly different from the more serious respiratory diseases or humans.

It is just as important that compensation bepayable under conditions of control, as it in the earlier efforts to eradicate the infection. There is one important aspect **of** the wholematter that I have not yet mentioned. The origin of the disease cannot be given with certainty. It is considered likely thatit was brought to this country by imported animals.

In recent years the only pigs imported to Australia have been the Landrace breed—20 of these were imported in 1957-58. However, no importations were direct into South Australia. There have been no importations at all since 1938, and a total ban has again been imposed by the Commonwealth. It has occurred to our departmental officers that the disease could possibly exist in other States. However, the authorities in those States tell us that it does occur. It is also postulated by some that it is not a new disease at all, but simply a chronic form of rhinitis that has existed in Victoria, and possibly elsewhere, for several years.

Mr Jenkins—Is the disease widespread or does it apply to any particular area?

The Hon. D. N. BEOOKMAK\*—I believe it has occurred in practically every part of the State where pigs are kept, with the possible .exception of the lower South-East. It is argued that this disease newly introduced io the susceptible South Australian population has caused the epidemic. These opinions are respected by our officers. It is hoped that they are correct. In order to give our neighbours ,every chance possible to keep the disease out, I recently telegraphed Ministers in other states putting the latest position to them. There has been much discussion on the responsibility of Landrace pigs in this regard. The following comments may therefore be of interest. The Landrace pigs imported to Australia mostly came from Ireland. Information available suggests that it is possible these animals could have carried rhinitis. I do not know that Landrace pigs are any more susceptible than others to the disease. Certainly many different breeds of pigs have been infected in South Australia. The economic effect of the disease is described by Mr. Irving, the Chief of the Division of Animal Husbandry, as follows:—

There is no doubt that the disease, as it occurs in South Australia, is the cause of economic loss on affected piggeries. The extent of losses on any piggery may depend on the existence of other diseases, and the level of husbandry practised. It is a low grade disease, which will add to the burdens of the industry. In United States of America it is considered to be responsible for a 7 per cent decrease in growth rate, and a 7 per cent decline in conversion efficiency (St. George). In the United Kingdom, it has been responsible for neo-natal mortalities of up to 50 per cent (Done). The existence of the disease on several of the best piggeries in the State, where husbandry is at high level, will provide some early evidence on the economic effects of the disease.

Mr. Irving has reported on the April, 1960, conference of Commonwealth and State officers in its discussion on the merits of control or eradication in the following terms:—

The occurrence of the disease in recent weeks in herds which have had no outside contacts for several months, greatly complicates its epi­demiology, and renders effective control virtually impossible.

While it was agreed that the attempt to contain the disease by quarantine of affected piggeries, and tracing of contacts has been justified in the early stages, it was unanimously agreed that, on available evidence, there is now no hope of either controlling the spread or eradicating the disease from this State.

The following is the Parliamentary Draftsman’s report on the Bill:—

Its purpose is to extend the definition of “disease” in the Swine Compensation Act. That Act provides for the establishment of a fund from the proceeds of a stamp duty from which compensation is payable where swine or carcasses are condemned because they are suffering or suspected to be suffering from disease. Section 4 of the Act defines “disease” for the purposes of the Act. The definition does not cover the disease known as infectious rhinitis, an outbreak of which recently occurred. In an endeavour to contain and prevent the spread of this disease, destruction was ordered, giving rise, not unnaturally, to claims for compensation, which the Government has felt should be paid. I do not think that any objection will be taken to the inclusion of this disease within the Act and the Government feels confident that Parliament will grant the necessary authority to cover payments which have already been made.

The particular disease to which I have referred is covered by clauses 3 *(a)* and 5 of the Bill, the latter clause operating to give retrospective effect to its inclusion in the principal Act . At the same time the Government is of the opinion that the definition clause should be extended by the addition of diseases declared by proclamation and this amendment is effected by clause 3 (6) of the Bill. Clause *4* inserts in the principal Act a new section empowering the Governor to declare additional diseases by way of proclamation or to remove any proclaimed disease from the list.

The Government believes these additional provisions to be necessary. Indeed, the very fact which has moved it to bring in the Bill at all illustrates the necessity for the provision now sought. The disease of infectious rhinitis has not occurred at any time during the history of the State. It did not occur at a time when Parliament was in session. There is no reason why other diseases might not occur in future or that outbreaks should necessarily occur when Parliament is in session. Measures have to be taken in these matters without delay. It is embarrassing to any Government to be in a position where it cannot safely take urgent and necessary measures to prevent the spread of a disease in swine, pending the enactment of amending legislation. I have given greater detail than might have been expected on such a Bill, but in view of the development of the disease I wanted to give the fullest information possible. I commend the Bill to honourable members.

Mr. FRANK WALSH secured the adjourn­ment of the debate.