**STOCK DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1983**

**Legislative Assembly, 16 November 1983. pages 1855-6**

Second reading

**The Hon. TED CHAPMAN (Alexandra)** obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Stock Diseases Act, 1934. Read a first time.

The Hon. TED CHAPMAN: I move: That this Bill be now read a second time. Members will recall that the member for Victoria raised a subject of some concern to him and his constituents in the South-East during Question Time on 24 August 1983 when he asked a question about an incident involving diseased sheep in the Lucindale district, and during the grievance debate on that day he expanded upon those concerns. The matter to which the member for Victoria drew the attention of the House involved a specific incident in which the movement of diseased sheep put at risk flocks on adjacent properties. In this case the sheep were carrying the disease of footrot.

South-eastern South Australia is one of several districts that has been affected from time to time with the footrot disease. I do not intend at this stage to detail the enormous expenditure and devastation that follow the introduction of a disease of that kind into a flock of sheep. I can assure members that those of us who have experienced the implications of footrot within their sheep are well aware, not only of the enormous amount of work that it involves but also the enormous amount of loss in weight and value, and in some cases by death, of sheep as a result of that disease. Its eradication becomes an equally long and painful process.

For the purposes of controlling, and where possible eliminating, that disease, the Stock Diseases Act, 1934, has been introduced and amended in order to not only provide penalties for the infringement of good management of livestock flocks but also for the purpose of providing guidelines for good management of properties where livestock is kept. Among other things, the Act provides clearly for the procedures that shall be adopted when a disease has been identified in a flock. In the case of footrot, the subject that prompted me to introduce this Bill, the Act provides that the stock inspector of the district shall be notified when a disease is suspected or found to be inherent in a mob of sheep. Section 19 of the Act provides:

(1) Every owner of diseased stock and every owner of stock which are suspected by the owner to be suffering from disease shall— (a) within twenty-four hours from the time when the stock are discovered to be diseased or are suspected by the owner to be suffering from disease, notify, by the quickest practicable means, the nearest inspector who is an officer of the Department of Agriculture or the chief inspector at Adelaide that the stock are discovered to be diseased or, as the case may be, are suspected to be suffering from disease, together with a description of the stock, the number thereof and the place where the stock are situated: Further, other paragraphs of that section require the stock owner to adhere to certain procedures in relation to controlling and confining that disease during the process of its clean up or eradication. For example, upon notification, the inspector may, by using his or her discretion, advise the adjoining landholders of the find, and this, for obvious reasons, will enable those adjoining landholders to exercise some good management with respect to keeping their stock, or making every effort to keep their stock, from the immediately adjacent properties on which is the identified diseased flock. However, there is no specific requirement under that section or any other section of the Stock Diseases Act that insists that all neighbours abutting the property carrying diseased stock shall be notified at the time of the identification.

This Bill, in part, proposes that that action is taken and that it shall be mandatory for the inspector to not only insist upon but to ensure that all owners of properties abutting the property with diseased flock are advised accordingly. Quite apart from it being a courtesy to do so in the ordinary process of blocking all risk avenues of the spread of the disease, it seems to be common sense to me and to the member for Victoria, who has prompted this issue. It would be good sense, and it would be accepted and supported by those who have had experience with footrot, as they know the implications and the costs attracted by its introduction into a flock.

The other purpose for introducing this Bill is to confine the movement of stock by vehicle only from a property where the disease is prevalent. In other words, the purpose of the Bill is to amend the Act to ensure that no diseased stock, in this case sheep affected by footrot, traverse on a public roadway without the specific permission of an authorised inspector of livestock. We are not seeking to prevent any stock so diseased from travelling on a public roadway at any time because, on thinking the subject through, we recognised that there might be specific occasions for special flock maintenance purposes (say, in the case of drought) where there is a need for the feeding and watering of the stock to traverse them along a roadway. In those special circumstances, provision should be made whereby an authorised inspector can approve such movement.

So, with that minor qualification we are seeking to limit (indeed, prevent other than in the very special circumstances outlined) the movement of stock on foot along a public roadway. Again, I suggest that there is no need for me to spell out in bold print the reasons, bearing in mind that, in communities such as the South-East region of South Australia and in other communities where sheep flocks are prevalent, if a person is allowed to move sheep on foot along such roadways, obviously others are, too. A follow-up flock could contract the disease simply by walking over the same ground, kicking the same clods, moving through the same grass, and so on.

Some argument has been presented that the risk of picking up footrot from the ground on which footrot diseased sheep have traversed is a thin one, and that the disease does not stay alive for more than a few days. Veterinary scientists have suggested to me that, in the right conditions and circumstances footrot disease may well stay alive up to seven days. Others in the same profession dispute that and claim that the life of the footrot virus in the ground, on the ground, on the stump, in the bark, or in the grass, is no more than a day or two, if that.

Notwithstanding the variation in professional advice along these lines about the life of the virus off the hoof of the sheep, there is a risk. While there is some risk it is our job in this place, I believe, to seek to eliminate it. One of the areas of the Act is loose in that regard, and that is the one to which I refer. For the two reasons I have outlined, I hope that, knowing the support that exists amongst the Liberal Party and amongst my rural colleagues in particular, that this brief explanation and the introduction of the Bill to amend collectively the Stock Diseases Act will attract the support of members on the other side of the House for yet another step in controlling a disease which has cost this State, and indeed the nation, millions and millions of dollars over the years that we have run sheep here. It will continue to do so while we fail at any level to exercise the most stringent controls on flock management practices. An explanation of the clauses of this Bill has been circulated to the Minister or spokesman on the Government side of the House. I seek leave to have that explanation inserted in Hansard without my reading it. Leave granted.

Explanation of Clauses

Clause 1 is the short title. Clause 2 proposes an amendment to section 19 of the principal Act, which deals with the duties of owners of diseased stock, or stock which are suspected to be suffering from the disease. One duty is to inform immediately the nearest inspector and another is to comply with directions given by that inspector. However, there is no specific duty to inform neighbouring owners. The amendment inserts such a duty.

Clause 3 inserts an additional subsection to section 25 of the principal Act, which is concerned with penalties (on leaving diseased stock on roads or lands). The proposed new subseciton (2) would also make it an offence to drive stock along roads, which is consistent with the intent of the provision that diseased stock should not be placed in a situation where the disease might spread to other stock.

The Hon. G.J. CRAFTER secured the adjournment of the debate.