**STOCK AND POULTRY DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1954**

**Legislative Assembly, 2 December 1954, pages 1677-8**

Second reading

The Hon A. W. CHRISTIAN (Minister of Agriculture)— I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

It’s purpose is to confer on the Governor powers make regulations for the purpose of preventing the introduction or spread of foot and mouth disease and other diseases of stock. Foot and mouth disease occurs in the United Kingdom and has an alarming incidence in Europe. It is widespread throughout the continents of Asia, Africa and South America but, so far, Australia has been free from the disease. The quarantine provisions of the Commonwealth are rigorously enforced with the object of preventing the introduction of this and other diseases into Australia but the Commonwealth Department of Health has expressed the view that no form of quarantine can be a sufficient guarantee against the, introduction of the infection of such a disease as foot and mouth disease and has suggested that plans should be formulated with a view to dealing with occurrence of the disease in Australia.

The matter has been considered by the Australian Agricultural Council and, in view of the disastrous effects an outbreak of foot and mouth disease would have on the livestock industries and export trade of Australia, it has been agreed that, in the event of the disease occurring in Australia, concerted and drastic action should be taken by all States affected to eradicate the disease. The action considered to be necessary is the slaughter of affected stock with the greatest possible speed. In order to enable immediate and drastic action to be taken as soon as the disease occurs, it is considered that legislative power to take these measures should be enacted and thus enable appropriate authority to take speedy action as the occasion arises.

The present provisions of the Stock and Poultry Diseases Act provide a variety of powers which are available to deal with the outbreak of disease, including the power of quarantine, but it is considered that these powers do not extend far enough to deal with a disease such as foot and mouth disease. The Bill accordingly provides that the Governor shall have additional powers to make regulations for the control of foot and mouth disease. The Bill also authorizes the making of regulations providing for remedial measures to be taken in respect of any other disease proclaimed by the Governor as a disease to which the Bill will apply. There are exotic diseases such as rinderpest, swine fever and blue tongue, an outbreak of which could also have far-reaching effects, and it is considered that the regulation-making power should extend to measures to control such diseases. The Bill empowers the Governor to make regulations upon a number of topics.

Provision may be made for the immediate notification of disease and the duty of notification may be placed on the owner of the stock, the proprietor of the land in question and on any veterinary surgeon or other person by whom the stock are treated. Regulations may be made for the quarantine of stock, land, fodder, etc. which has been exposed to infection or an inspector suspects may be affected with disease or may have been exposed to infection and for the disinfection of any such fodder, fittings, etc., and of any persons exposed to infection. The regulations may prohibit the removal of stock, fodder, etc., from any quarantined area, may prohibit the entry of persons into any quarantined land, and may prohibit persons leaving such land. The feeding of stock may be controlled by regulation and the taking of specimens from disease affected Stock may be prohibited.

The most important regulation-making power is one which will enable the Chief Inspector of Stock, with the approval of the Minister, to order the destruction, of any stock quarantined by reason of disease or which has been exposed to infection with disease and of any farm produce or fittings which are infected with or have been exposed to disease. A further power will enable the Chief Inspector, with the approval of the Minister, to destroy any wild animals or birds for the purpose of preventing the spread of disease. Thus, the Bill will enable regulations to be made so that, if foot and mouth disease or any comparable disease occurs in South Australia, the necessary remedial action to deal with the disease can be taken with the greatest possible promptitude and without the delay which would perhaps make all the difference between stamping out the disease or not. All regulations made under the Bill will be subject to the ordinary rules relating to subordinate legislation and will be laid before Parliament in the usual way and be subject to disallowance.

Foot and mouth disease particularly affects all cloven-footed animals, and the mortality rate is generally greater than 20 per cent. Another serious consequence of the disease is that the stock lose condition and production returns are adversely affected. The introduction of this type of disease and some of the other exotic diseases to which I have referred has been made easier by modern transport facilities such as the aeroplane, and unless luggage and other goods entering the country are strictly examined the virus of the disease may be introduced into and spread throughout the country. Present-day quarantine regulations, however, make it difficult for such diseases to be introduced as the customs officials thoroughly examine luggage and parcels of goods entering the country.

Recently an outbreak of foot and mouth disease was introduced into Canada on the clothing of a migrant who had been a dairy hand in Europe, but Canadian authorities were able to stamp it out very quickly. Prompt action is necessary because the disease can spread rapidly and possibly involve millions of pounds’ worth of stock. In Western Australia there was an outbreak of rinderpest not long ago. It was introduced by means of a load of manure taken from a ship and spread in somebody’s garden, and it was not long before all the animals in the Fremantle area had to be quarantined and slaughtered to prevent its spreading. Such an outbreak can be very costly because of the large numbers of stock which may have to be slaughtered.

This matter was discussed at the last meeting of the Australian Agricultural Council in July, following on which the Commonwealth Government agreed to provide 50 per cent of the finance necessary to combat an outbreak of the disease; the States are to provide the balance. More recently officers of the various State Departments of Agriculture met and agreed on the proportions in which the States should contribute towards the total amount; the South Australian share will be about 10 per cent of the balance of the 50 per cent required. it is proposed to use that money in stamping out outbreaks of disease and in providing compensation for the owners of stock in the State where the disease may occur. For instance, if an outbreak occurred in Queensland South Australia’s contribution, as well as the contributions of other States, would be used to deal with it.

Mr. Stott—If a farmer buys affected sheep in a saleyard, what steps can he take subsequently ?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—As soon as it is discovered that the sheep are affected they will be quarantined.

Mr. Stott—Can he apply for compensation?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—That is one of the purposes of the fund to which I l have referred. Another purpose is the financing any eradication campaign considered necessary.

Mr. LAWN secured the adjournment the debate.