



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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TICK ERADICATION

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (11.50 a.m.): I rise to address the House on the important issue of tick reinfestation and the millions of dollars the beef and dairy industries are losing over the government's refusal to protect those producers in the tick-free and protected areas. My electorate contains a large area classified as tick free or protected because many producers were encouraged and led to believe that once tick free they had the backing of government to have their status enforced. Not so! The ongoing drought and declining prices and the necessity to move stock from infested areas to saleyards, abattoirs or for agistment are costing producers millions of dollars. The reinfestation of tick-free and protected areas is a further cost producers cannot afford, nor should they have to. No doubt the government would like to see the industry self-regulated and user pays funding of tick inspectors and inspections for stock movement. But where is the law to enforce the protection of the tick-free and protected areas?

The DPI stated last year that no further plans for area eradication to extend the tick-free area will be sanctioned until the current eradication areas are consolidated. Consolidation, to my mind, means having all properties within the eradication area cleared of ticks to the sustainable double-fenced boundary set down at the commencement of the scheme. Until this is achieved those producers who have spent their time and money over at least two seasons to eradicate the ticks are at continual risk of having their properties reinfested. In one instance alone, three years after being declared free of ticks, one property owner is still first removed from a large property whose owners have still not participated in an approved eradication program after the previous owner reneged on a commitment to do so. This places them in a position where they have to continually treat cattle on one subdivision of their property as there are flood fences between the two properties, which sometimes allows the stock to mix. This is an ongoing cost which they cannot afford. Having spent some \$12 to \$15 per head on 1,000 head to eradicate the ticks, they and many others now have the added cost of maintaining herds free of ticks due to the DPI's unwillingness to adopt a policy to make it compulsory for stock owners in the protected and tick-free areas to clean their properties of those ticks.

In many years of experience producers are thoroughly convinced that outbreaks of ticks in clean areas can be attributed to tick infested trucks picking up cattle from the clean properties and the illegal movement of stock, with the former being the main offender. Witnesses have seen soil contaminated with fallen ticks being kicked by stock through the gaps between the boards in a stock crate, and a property some 40 kilometres within the tick-free area became infected from a truck that came from a coastal area to pick up a bull. In this case major losses from tick fever, which followed, were narrowly averted due to the owner noticing the ticks a few days before the fever struck.

My deep concern now is that the charges to producers being applied by the DPI and the increases planned for the future for the clearance of stock, which I believe are excessive, will lead to illegal movements of stock. I am concerned that movements of stock across the tick line will become non-viable and that producers who own property on both sides of the tick line will be seriously disadvantaged economically. Graziers, having experienced the benefit of operating a property which is free of cattle tick, naturally are biased towards large-scale tick eradication and advancement of the tick-

free area. However, the initiative to eradicate must come from the producers of the area concerned and must have the strong backing and support of government to be worth proceeding with.

Recently I attended a meeting of the local tick eradication group composed of producers who have strived to be tick free. They were encouraged to pursue this course as the loss of revenue and production to beef and dairy cattle was and continues to be shown as substantial. The continual struggle to keep tick free caused one frustrated and irate producer to throw up his arms and say, 'Why the hell do I bother when the protected area cannot be enforced because the legislation has no teeth? Why doesn't the minister give us some enforceable laws to protect our properties contained within this protected area?' Even people outside the protected area believe that those in the protected area should be protected.

It should be clear to government that the maintenance of the tick line has had enormous benefits to south-east Queensland in the past. I feel that the number of infected properties in the tick-free and protected areas is an extremely small percentage of cattle properties in those areas, which could have been a lot less if appropriate measures were taken by the DPI to have their owners act responsibly and eradicate the ticks. To make sudden and sweeping changes to the control of the tick line could lead to a complete breakdown of the tick-free status of the tick-free area and cause untold economic losses. This problem will go on forever while governments refuse to show some backbone and bring in commonsense legislation and make rules and enforce all properties in tick-free and protected areas to go on a compulsory tick eradication program. They should clean up this state of the cattle tick and so ensure a strong and thriving cattle industry able to sell worldwide without the hassles of chemical and residue problems.