



Speech by
Ian Rickuss

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

Hansard Tuesday, 30 October 2007

EQUINE INFLUENZA

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (9.53 pm): I rise to speak about the equine influenza virus which has spread throughout south-east Queensland and which is rampant in my electorate. I am very disappointed with the way the department of primary industries, the minister's office and the DG have managed this situation. Gatton Mayor Steve Jones rang the chief vet asking for an explanation of infected properties in the Gatton shire and to talk about what he should do with his workers. He was insulted by the chief vet, Mr Glanville. I have a letter that I will table for the parliament's information which says that he did not insult the mayor but he still apologises for insulting him.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 4 October 2007, from Kareena Arthy, Biosecurity Queensland to Councillor Steve Jones, Mayor, Gatton Shire Council relating to a complaint made to the Crime and Misconduct Committee.

It is a total contradiction in terms. I just cannot believe that a local mayor who was trying to find out about what is going on with equine influenza would actually be insulted by the chief vet of a department of this government. It is absolutely atrocious. The management of the equine influenza outbreak has been terrible. A person rang me on Sunday. Unfortunately, she could not get a vet to her horse and the horse died on Monday. She rang the hotline on the Sunday before but still was not able to get a vet to come to see her horse, which, as I said, died on the Monday. She was very upset and very frustrated with the whole process.

People who look after sick horses and who are on invalid pensions are struggling to feed those horses. Because of the restrictions, they virtually cannot feed the horses and are suffering hardship themselves. This whole matter has been managed terribly. There are now over 2,000 infected properties in south-east Queensland. The government keeps making these grandiose statements about how it is going to manage it and contain it but it seems to keep spreading further and further. I sent the department emails four or five weeks ago saying that the management process that it is using is just not working, yet it continues to use the same process of containment. I honestly feel that it would have been better off letting the whole process go and cleaning up then. It has to start vaccinating all of the horses in the red zone. If it is going to contain this process, it has to vaccinate all horses in the red zone and has to supply vaccinations for vets and for people to use. There are definite hardship cases out there. Those in the recreational horse industry are suffering, and suffering to a great extent because of the equine influenza outbreak and the way it has been managed. It is a disappointment that the chief vet is taking the pressure so poorly.