Speech By

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MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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ADJOURNMENT

Pimelea

Ms LEAHY (Warrego—LNP) (1.27 am): I rise to speak about the native plant pimelea, its prevalence in the Warrego electorate owing to the winter rains and the devastating effect that pimelea has on cattle producers in South-West Queensland.

Pimelea is a small native herb that is mainly found in the inland areas of Australia. Three species are usually associated with the disease: pimelea simplex, trichostachya and elongata. Historically, pimelea poisoning has been considered a regional problem, occurring mainly around the St George district in South-West Queensland. However, three poisonous pimelea species are now found throughout the beef cattle regions of Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory, extending over about one-quarter of Australia's pastoral lands. That gives an insight into the extent of this problem.

Recently, 150 primary producers met at Begonia in my electorate to hear from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation experts on the symptoms of poisoning, effects, treatment options and future directions for research. One local producer has lost 150 head of cattle—breeders, calves and bulls. He is not alone. The value of stock losses would easily be in the millions of dollars in the St George district.

At Begonia, senior veterinary officer Louise Mullemeister clarified the common misunderstandings about pimelea, advising that poisoning was not a direct effect of the highly irritant chemical simplexin entering the lungs. Research suggests that ingested and inhaled plant particles that get stuck in the nasal secretions are swallowed and end up in the stomach to be absorbed by the digestive system. The toxin enters the circulation and causes constriction of the blood vessels in the lungs. Fortunately, some research indicates that simplexin is not residual in animal tissues, providing an assurance of the safety of meat products from areas affected by pimelea.

There is no specific treatment for pimelea poisoning of affected cattle except some management options and also some herbicide treatments. There are large areas involved. Therefore, herbicide is quite difficult. There is a need for more research to fully understand the chemical analysis and combine this with animal trials. That is not cheap.

I call on all levels of government—local, state and federal—and industry organisations for greater support of pimelea affected areas. I hope that they can find some solutions for cattle producers affected by poisonous pimelea.