




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

---

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2022

### **ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.12 pm): I rise to speak to this bill because of a deep concern with the provisions concerning feral animal control, specifically feral pigs. This bill has been titled in a way that implies that it is all about the care of domestic animals. Indeed, that is how Labor have promoted it on social and mainstream media. Who doesn't love pets? We all love pets. Who doesn't think that those guilty of cruelty to animals should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law? I believe that it is a sleight of hand to find buried in this cuddly bill a clause outlawing the use of pig poison, or yellow phosphorus, as it is called.

The size of Queensland physically, and the range of ecosystems it encompasses, means that we have multiple, large reservoirs of feral animals—wild dogs, wild cats, wild goats and especially feral pigs. This is simply not the same as other states either in scale or spread. To be frank, for decades we have only attempted to manage the population levels because eradication seems to be the impossible dream.

Drought can suppress numbers for a time, but then inevitably the weather turns and you get a run of La Nina years, as we are currently experiencing. I can guarantee that this triple La Nina will make populations of feral animals skyrocket. The current wet weather will be reflected in the population upswings of feral pig numbers. Landholders will certainly be preparing to deal with this, if they are not already in parts of the state. At such a time it is devastating that the government is choosing to remove their most effective tool without anything comparable to replace it.

Feral pigs do an enormous amount of environmental and agricultural damage. This is why management of feral pigs is an ongoing issue in Queensland. As bad as it is, damage to the Queensland environment is not the only problem these feral populations create. An even graver problem is that they constitute a reservoir population for a range of serious, exotic diseases including foot-and-mouth disease, lumpy skin disease and Japanese encephalitis, to list a few. If we had the funding for more research, I am sure we would identify more diseases for which they are a carrier.

The urgent point is that the three diseases I have named are all clear and present dangers to Queensland, as we speak. As a northern state with a sea border and as a major livestock producer, we stand at great risk of these disease incursions. We are the front line. Minister Furner's federal counterpart, Senator Murray Watt, tells us he is doing everything he can to halt foot-and-mouth disease in Indonesia, as he should. Foot-and-mouth disease would have a devastating consequence. It is difficult to exaggerate how severe an incursion could be. It could send our livestock industry to the wall, see us lose hard-won markets and lose our herds and see our rural communities wither.

I would expect the minister for agriculture to do everything he can to help the federal minister and to have the preparations for defending our livestock industry well in hand in case of the worst. We are in the direct firing line of this battle, as the minister knows. One key preparation is reducing the dangerous reservoir population of feral pigs. We need to make a strong effort anyway due to the wet. Foot-and-mouth disease makes it imperative. I am calling on the minister for agriculture and also the Minister for the Environment, Minister Scanlon, to get on board and make sure that we have the

weapons and the resources to be able to deal with this. I say Minister Scanlon because the Queensland government does have a responsibility to manage the issue of national parks, but the effort is never as great as it could be right now.

National parks only constitute a small fraction of the Queensland landscape. Consequently, the greater part of the practical management of these feral pig populations largely falls to local landholders, rather than government. Yellow phosphorus, or CSSP pig poison, as it is more commonly known, is one of the most successful methods landholders use in eradicating pests like feral pigs on their properties.

It defies logic that, at a time when Queensland is facing one of the biggest biosecurity challenges in modern history, and facing the context of a triple La Nina, Labor want to ban one of the most effective, accessible and widely used ways landholders can manage the threat. To remove this tool from the toolbox before doing any research on potential replacements, without in anyway having investigated our capacity to manage feral pigs without CSSP pig poison, is extremely irresponsible and sets us up for a potential disaster of a scale previously unseen.

To say the move brings us into line with other states is just a cop-out. Queensland is uniquely different to other states because of our geography, because of our population distribution patterns, because of our location on the north-east corner of the continent, because of the number of ecosystems we encompass and because of the sheer physical size. Once again, Labor is trying to govern Queensland as if it were Victoria. My own electorate of Gregory is roughly the combined size of Victoria and Tasmania! That is how big just one electorate in this parliament is—Victoria and Tasmania combined.

Solutions to problems in Queensland often have to be similarly unique. The Queensland government should not ban CSSP until the impact of the ban and the impacts and effectiveness of potential replacements have been properly investigated and assessed by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Furthermore, when the investigation is complete, agricultural industry stakeholders and Biosecurity Queensland must be properly briefed and must agree that we have the capability to control feral pigs without CSSP. Only then should a ban be legislated. It would be ideal if the department could also undertake investigations to better understand the threat of exotic diseases constituted by these reservoir populations.

In the current circumstances, like my LNP colleagues, I will be voting against clause 16, the proposed amendment that seeks to ban the use of CSSP pig poison; however, we will not be opposing the rest of the bill. I urge members to consider the serious impacts of banning this important tool for regional and remote Queensland. We have lumpy skin disease and foot-and-mouth disease on our doorstep. We must have the tools to control that. Our beef industry is worth billions of dollars to our economy. If you get lumpy skin disease carried by pigs or foot-and-mouth disease carried by pigs, we will have a major problem. Right now our beef producers are dealing with a number of circumstances. They have high prices but they have high input costs at the moment, so anybody who thinks that beef producers are making loads of money is simply wrong. Carting cattle from Winton down into Dinmore costs a lot of money, and if an exotic disease comes into our beef industry it will be devastating.

I implore the minister to have another look at this. Minister, please go back to the department. Go back to the experts and try and find an alternative if you want to legislate against this important tool for us. It is important that we have the appropriate tools to cut down our feral pig population in regional Queensland. As the member for Gregory, I have seen firsthand the devastation of not only feral pigs but also dogs. We have made some very good progress when it comes to wild dogs, and I congratulate the government on the wild dog fencing, but feral pigs are out of control. We have had three years of La Nina. It is only going to be a matter of time before the population explodes. We need to control those numbers in national parks. I call on the Minister for the Environment to get in control of national parks when it comes to pig populations. It is imperative.