

Question on Notice

No. 1078

Asked on 4 September 2018

MR C BOYCE ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the increase in cattle presenting with ticks at tick-free sale yards in Roma and Dalby and outbreaks in tick-fever deaths on clean properties since the relaxation of rules in July 2016, which allowed an on-property certification process—

Will the Minister advise (a) how the current legislation has improved biosecurity along the tick line and (b) why there is no longer a control zone (protected area) to maintain integrity of the clean properties?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

No rules about the movement of livestock across the tick line to destinations in the cattle tick free zone have been relaxed. All requirements under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, Biosecurity Regulation 2016 and Queensland Biosecurity Manual for the movement of livestock remain in place.

There have been no cattle tick infested cattle detected at Roma Saleyards since the commencement of the Biosecurity Act on 1 July 2016.

In relation to the Dalby Saleyards, there have been three consignments of cattle found to be infested with cattle ticks since 1 July 2016. All of these consignments had originated from the cattle tick free zone. This is consistent with previous levels of detections that have occurred at this facility. In all cases, the detections were managed appropriately under the supervision of Biosecurity Queensland inspectors.

From a biosecurity perspective, cattle moving to property in the cattle tick free zone (other than a meat processing facility or feedlot) from the cattle tick infested zone must be inspected and chemically treated by an accredited certifier. This is exactly the same as the previous Third Party Provider (TPP) system. There is no such protocol as “self-assessment” as incorrectly reported in the media.

Movement requirements in place for livestock crossing the tick line from the infested zone to the free zone are carefully considered and risk based and provide a range of options for moving livestock into the cattle tick-free zone from the introduction of cattle ticks through high-risk movements and recognising that low risk activities can be managed in other ways.

With the introduction of the new cattle tick management framework in 2016, the TPP system was expanded to allow the inspection and treatment regime to be completed at places other than the traditional “clearing dips” on the tick line. If producers choose to use their own facilities to clear livestock, strict protocols must be followed to ensure the accredited certifier can appropriately inspect and treat the cattle. Treatments used on property can include pour on and/or injectable products in addition to traditional plunge dip chemicals.

These changes offer more flexible and cost effective options for producers moving livestock across the tick line and make it easier for them to comply with the legislative requirements.

The current accredited certifier system is backed by a rigorous training program. Certifiers are audited yearly to ensure the system is working.

Individual property owners are responsible for managing their biosecurity risks, including cattle tick. A general biosecurity obligation applies to all producers with livestock, both in the tick infested and tick free zone, to manage cattle ticks and minimise the risk of ticks to others.

Cattle producers and processors and the community can be assured that officers from Biosecurity Queensland closely monitor the system to ensure the cattle tick free zone is in no way compromised.

In response to the question about the former cattle tick control zone, this zone was removed as a result of the Queensland Biosecurity Regulation – Have your say – Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) released in 2014 by the then Agriculture Minister, John McVeigh.

Some of the reasons provided by respondents for the removal of the “control” zone included:

- a) producers in the free zone believed it was not delivering an effective buffer;
- b) movement requirements that applied were not sufficient to encourage infested property owners to eradicate infestations; and
- c) The legislation was confusing and difficult to understand.

The Palaszczuk Government will continue to work with industry to ensure a sustainable approach to cattle ticks in Queensland.