



NEW SOUTH WALES

Minister for Police
Leader of the House

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Noreen Hay
Chair
Legislative Assembly
Public Accounts Committee
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000



25 MAY 2006

Dear Ms Hay,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the pending 'inquiry on the Auditor General's reports, *NSW Agriculture: Managing Animal Disease Emergencies and Implementing the Ovine Johne's Disease Program*.'

I am pleased to advise that the Police Portfolio point-of-contact for the Ovine Johne's Disease Program is the Corporate Spokesperson for Rural Crime, Assistant Commissioner Steve Bradshaw (ph: 02 6881 3104), whilst the point-of-contact for the NSW Agriculture: Managing Animal Disease Emergencies is Sergeant Ben Millington (ph: 02 9265 4905) from State Emergency Services.

The confirmation of Foot and Mouth (FMD) cases in the European Union, Argentina and Asia, and of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in Japan, the US and Canada has served as a warning to all countries about the threat of spread of these virulent diseases and the need for Australia to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to protect against the entry/spread of exotic/endemic diseases and pests.

NSW Police believes that the theft of diseased and stolen livestock and feral animals poses one of the greatest risks to Australia's comparatively "clean" flock/herd status, impacting not only on the victim of stock theft but the broader industry. Indeed, years of limited checks on livestock movements not only made it difficult to contain diseases like Johne's within designated areas but had also made it comparatively easy for offenders to transport large volumes of stolen stock without fear of detection.

NSW Police has been steadily re-building relationships with all primary industry agencies since the introduction of the Rural Crime Investigators program in 2001, in particular with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), AQIS, NSW Food Authority, RSPCA and the Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPB). Not only have NSW Police had input into legislative changes, but the NSW Police Rural Crime Investigators (RCIs) are conducting joint

investigations and operations with these agencies to combat theft, the illegal transport of stock, and the spread of livestock and plant diseases.

As “authorised officers with power to “exercise all or any of the powers of an inspector” under the Stock Diseases Act 1923 and the Exotic Diseases Act 1991, police have historically had a significant role in the control of stock disease. The development of the Memorandum of Understanding between NSW Police, the DPI and the RLPB has resulted in greater consultation into planning operational objectives in these areas. Additionally, the DPI Coordinator Emergency Response Animal Industries has had significant input into the training of the RCIs.

Importantly, the Deputy Commissioner Operations, Mr Andrew Scipione, and Assistant Commissioner of NSW Police, Mr Mark Goodwin, have significant roles on the NSW State Emergency Management Committee ensuring that NSW Police has worked closely with all other relevant agencies under the Emergency Management Arrangements for New South Wales (NSW State Disaster Plan and Animal Health Emergency Sub-Plan) in relation to Avian Influenza and Foot and Mouth exercises.

The NSW Police Portfolio fully supports the direction of DPI as the lead agency and is very conscious of the experiences in Great Britain and Mangrove Mountain of the other crime and social justice problems that emerge during these emergencies i.e. thefts, assaults, suicides, fraud, deliberate contamination of stock et al.

I am advised that despite the risk of spreading OJD/BJD, some producers from notified zones try to sell their stock in protected zones because they receive significantly lower prices for their stock in their local ‘notified’ saleyards. Operation Villerville was the first major joint operation between NSW Police, the DPI and RLPB to restrict the illegal movement of stock from notified OJD and Bovine Johne’s Disease zones to protected zones.

The RCIs worked with the Department of Primary Industries Stock Inspectors and Rural Lands Protection Board Rangers to inspect all livestock booked into livestock sales. Penalty notices were issued to those producers/livestock carriers who failed to possess correctly completed documentation such as Transported Stock Statements or orders made under the Stock Diseases Act 1923. Producers/livestock carriers delivering stock from notified zones¹ were breached for moving potentially diseased stock into protected areas.

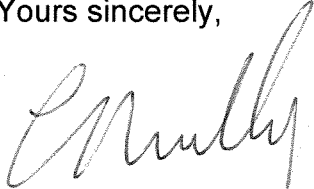
RCIs have in the past attended public protests involving sheep producers voicing their dissatisfaction with the OJD Program. These protests weren’t disruptive to the broader community, however as this is an emotive issue to many producers, NSW Police gave assures to the Chief Executive Officer of the State Council of the Rural Lands Protection Boards Association of NSW, Mr Orr, in 2003, that the RCIs would be available to assist RLPB rangers during on-property visits if requested.

¹ Areas where OJD and BJD have been detected.

I am advised that NSW Police believes that there is now a more strategic and coordinated approach to the OJD Program.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Scully', written in a cursive style.

CARL SCULLY MP
Minister for Police