

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 4 – INDUSTRY

INQUIRY INTO PREVENTION OF *CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT (RESTRICTIONS ON STOCK ANIMAL PROCEDURES) BILL 2019*

Supplementary Questions:

Question 1. If the bill were to pass in its existing form, mulesing would be banned by 2022. What are the available operation strategies for woolgrowers to achieve the new requirements?

WoolProducers response:

While there are genetic pathways that producers could adopt in the longer term, there simply is not enough time for these strategies to be adopted before 2022. Further, to view the ‘genetic solution’ as the answer to this issue is too simplistic. Merino sheep are run across a range of geographic and climatic regions, and further, that there are different types of Merino sheep, some that genetically do not require mulesing.

However, there are also large numbers of lower micron sheep that would require more fly chemical, crutching, and longer acting internal parasite control chemicals if mulesing was not an option, this is particularly concerning given the increase in chemical resistance.

In all likelihood a major operational strategy that would be employed by many NSW woolgrowers would be to exit the industry all together and pursue other land use alternatives, such as prime lamb, cattle, or crop production. At a time when the wool production is at an historical low this would be a dire outcome, not just for the NSW wool industry, but the national industry given the size of the NSW wool clip.

Question 2. Could the outcome of the bill result in large numbers of merino sheep being offloaded to the saleyards? What would be the effect of this on the sheep and wool markets in NSW? Would a possible outcome be large scale slaughter of wool producing sheep?

WoolProducers response:

As mentioned above, many woolgrowers would exit the industry if mulesing was not a legal husbandry procedure, so the possibility of sheep being sent to saleyards or direct to slaughter would be high. Although, there are large parts of NSW that are currently in the rebuilding phase following the easing of prolonged drought periods, so the impact may not be as high as if there were high flock numbers.

As with any market, when there is an influx of product onto the market during a concentrated period, supply may outstrip demand, leading to a negative impact on prices paid.

Question 3. If the bill were to pass in its current form would it trigger or require an Industry Adjustment Package from government? What would be the impact on employment in regional NSW?

WoolProducers response:

The economic impact on the NSW wool industry of this proposed bill would be huge. This impact would not only be felt by individual producers, but also regional and national economies.

The regional economic impacts of removing sheep from rural areas are well-known and lead to a substantial decline of small rural communities. These communities, including schools, health facilities and business are dependent on the patronage of staff and families from sheep and wool enterprises.

A relevant comparison on the negative impact on regional economies that occurs when significant numbers of wool producers exit the industry can be made with the impact of wild dog predation in western Queensland.

*'During its 'heyday', when sheep production was the dominant agricultural activity in the region, it was reported that Charleville used to have around 200 men employed just by the sheep industry. The direct economic flow-on benefits went to shopkeepers, service station owners and indirectly flowed on to every facet of the community.'*¹

If this proposed bill was passed, this may trigger calls for an Industry Adjustment Package, however any financial support package would also need to address impacts to regional economies, including small businesses. The cost of these measures would be immense.

¹ Santhi Wicks, Kasia Mazur, Patricia Please, Saan Ecker and Benjamin Buetre, 2014, *An integrated assessment of the impact of wild dogs in Australia*, page 46-48

<http://data.daff.gov.au/data/warehouse/9aai/2014/AssessWildDogs/AssessWildDogs20140428v.1.1.0.pdf>