

Foot-and-mouth disease

Last Friday it appeared to me that the Minister of Agriculture was trying to cover up something. I see by the answer that the minister has read that notification was given to Ottawa first on December 7, with respect to this condition of disease.

Regardless of whether it was not until January 15 that anyone from Ottawa visited the area, I would point out that there are plenty of veterinary inspectors in that part of Saskatchewan. It would not be absolutely necessary for one to come from Ottawa.

Mr. Diefenbaker: There were two of them there on December 1.

Mr. Charlton: I understand there were two inspectors on the farms on December 1, and that they made a report to Ottawa on December 7, according to the answers. On Friday last, as found at page 14 of *Hansard*, the minister said:

The first diagnosis of the disease in Saskatchewan was that it was stomatitis.

They mean by that vesicular stomatitis.

It takes some time to deal with a situation of that kind. Right up until last week the chief authority in the province of Saskatchewan was maintaining that that is what the disease really was. That was the situation even a week ago. I think that gives some reason for believing that the veterinarians, whether they were government veterinarians or practitioners in the area, could not be expected to have arrived at a different conclusion.

The minister also had something to say last Friday on the question of under whose authority this matter came. He said that it was definitely the health of animals branch of the dominion Department of Agriculture and not the province. If that be so, then he is trying to unload the responsibility for this diagnosis on the provincial veterinarians of Saskatchewan rather than the veterinarians of his department. I say that because it is not Dr. Fulton who is in charge of the dominion veterinary branch in Saskatchewan. It is Dr. Christie. I presume Dr. Fulton is a provincial veterinarian, and I would take it he has nothing whatsoever to do with the situation beyond co-operating with the federal authorities. According to the answer given this afternoon, Dr. Childs, the veterinary director general, did not go out there until January 15. It was my understanding that he was out there before Christmas. As a matter of fact I understand he has made three trips to the west.

Mr. Gardiner: My hon. friend may have got that impression from what I said. I said he was there twice and I thought once was before Christmas. The indication is that once was in January and the other time in February, and I am assuming that covers the whole thing.

Mr. Charlton: The minister said before what he has said now. I may have got that impression from the statement he made. The minister says that he made two trips, and of course he made another trip on the 16th of February just before quarantine proceedings were instituted. We will say that he did not go there the first time until the 15th of January. What happened between the 15th of January and the 16th of February? Did he not make a test in the field? I have here a letter signed by the veterinary director general, dated April 18, 1951. I am not going to read all of it but there is one short paragraph with respect to diagnosis which I think is quite significant. It reads as follows:

Diagnosis is confirmed by animal inoculations carried out at the site of the outbreak or suspected outbreak, test animals being brought in from a distance and from areas where vesicular diseases have not existed. The actual test inoculations are carried out by specially trained veterinarians. Introduction of foot-and-mouth disease into Canada would be disastrous to the livestock industry, particularly if the disease could not be promptly localized and eradicated.

It has been said that Dr. Childs went out there on the 15th of January. Here are the instructions given to veterinarians all across the Dominion of Canada with respect to foot-and-mouth disease:

Practitioners should keep in mind that: (a) Any vesicular disease of animals may be very dangerous. (b) It should be promptly reported to the nearest departmental veterinarian who will appreciate your co-operation in taking appropriate measures to prevent spread.

I should like to repeat the first point.

(a) Any vesicular disease of animals may be very dangerous.

This letter was sent out to all veterinarians over the signature of Dr. Childs, veterinary director general, who went out there himself on the 15th of January. If what he says as to the danger is so, why were tests not made in the field? I understand that is possible although the minister said today it is not possible to diagnose the disease without serum. I want to contradict the minister on that point because serum is not required for a diagnosis of this disease. What the serum is required for is to type the virus.

Mr. Gardiner: To prove your diagnosis.

Mr. Charlton: No, it is not needed to prove the diagnosis. All it is needed for is to prove the type of virus in the infected cattle. I do not think it is very important whether or not it is typed. If we know there is foot-and-mouth disease then it is foot-and-mouth disease no matter what type it may be. When that can be ascertained in a short period of from four to six days at the outside by the injection of animals, why was it not done