

estimate that millions of cattle will have to be slaughtered because of a very serious epidemic of what they call the mad cow disease or, in the official terminology, they call it bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Having been a farmer for longer than I care to think about we have gone through the blood testing procedure with livestock on many occasions in our own operations. There is a huge expense connected with it, even in terms of the producers, let alone the services of the veterinary involved or the veterinarians for Agriculture Canada.

Agriculture Canada has some excellent veterinarians, not only out in the field in the various counties or areas they serve but also here in Agriculture Canada in Ottawa. I certainly give them my full measure of support for the excellent work they are carrying on.

When I look at this piece of legislation that will impose another cost on producers at a time when the profit margins are very low, or in many cases do not exist, I think the Government of Canada has an obligation to provide those services to protect the health of animals, particularly those that may be subjected to diseases which come into this country with animals from Europe or other nations where there may be diseases such as the one I just mentioned from Great Britain: the mad cow disease.

In spite of the fact that we have high health standards in Canada, I remind the parliamentary secretary and the ministers who are in the House that last year we had an outbreak of brucellosis. Carriers of brucellosis were identified as coming out of one of the prairie provinces where there was a dispersal sale of an infected herd. The animals from that dispersal sale were sold across North America and, in fact, some of them came into Ontario and created havoc among producers here who had what we thought were clean herds.

• (1200)

When such an animal comes into an area and a quarantine is placed on a five-square-kilometre surrounding area, is that cost to be borne by the people within that area whose herds are clean but have to be tested to reaffirm that status? Or is that cost borne by the person who imported the animal that was infected?

Government Orders

I think we have to make that very clear. Clause 60 (2) says:

The fees, charges and costs are recoverable jointly and severally from the owner or occupier of the place or the owner of the animal or thing and from the person having the possession, care or control of it immediately before its inspection, treatment, segregation, detention, forfeiture, quarantine, testing analysis, identification, storage, removal—

Based on what the bill states, if someone brings into an area an exotic pet or another exotic animal that could be a carrier, it looks as though all the people in that five-square-kilometre area would be responsible to pick up the cost of testing if an outbreak did occur.

I recall that, in 1952, we had an outbreak in Canada of foot and mouth disease. While the outbreak was arrested, the loss was enormous. Thousands of cattle which could not be replaced were quarantined and slaughtered. Even though there was compensation paid to those producers under this legislation, a lot of those animals simply could not be compensated for because of the genetic strain and the breed lines they represented. The losses were borne by the producers, as well as the Government of Canada. To add on additional cost at this time is not appropriate.

We have heard a lot of comment about the bison herd in Wood Buffalo National Park. A lot of people think that it should be wiped out. Last September the hon. member for Kent and myself flew over that park. People do not know what they are talking about when they say they are going to eliminate that herd. They are not familiar with the terrain of the area where that herd grazes.

I suggest that there are outside influences putting pressure on the government to eliminate that herd, because there are grazing grounds there that may look very enticing to other interests. There may be people with ambitions to set up buffalo burger outlets featuring the carcasses of these animals. They say that 33 per cent of them are infected.

Having had experience in blood testing animals for brucellosis or tuberculosis, I know that one has to take a blood sample. I suggest to the House that those blood samples have been taken from infected animals and, consequently, the results show a higher percentage infected than if a cross-section of the whole herd had been taken.

My rationale for making this statement is that if one is going to take a blood sample, does one take it from some rambunctious, 2,600-pound bull that measures seven feet at the shoulder and that is liable to chase one up the