

For example, let us say that bovine tuberculosis is detected in a steer at slaughter, but that that steer was not adequately identified. It has come from a feedlot that had been stocked from perhaps 50 to 100 farms. Once they are mixed together, you are unable to tell just which farm that particular steer came from. Inspectors then have to visit 50 to 100 farms, often across three or four provinces, and test all the cattle in order to determine that, in fact, the disease did not originate at that farm.

● (1640)

Senator Hays: I will interrupt you there, because I think I have an answer, but I would like to ask you for a forecast as to when you think electronic means of identification may become common.

Dr. Bulmer: It would become common if we embarked upon a particular program to eradicate any given disease. For example, if BSE inadvertently came to Canada, we would embark upon a program to eradicate it.

Senator Hays: So we would spend some money on it, as a nation?

Senator Doody: Could you repeat the question?

Senator Hays: We would then bring the resources of the state to bear on the issue and do some research on it, or are we doing that anyway?

Dr. Bulmer: We have been doing research on an ongoing basis on scrapie in sheep, which is a similar type of disease.

Senator Hays: I am more interested in the technological advance of having an electronic means of identifying an animal, and whether or not, through this legislation, that is being stimulated and is ongoing more rapidly than it would otherwise be.

Dr. Bulmer: Yes. Agriculture Canada has a standing committee that is investigating and tracking the development of electronic means of identification.

Senator Hays: So, apart from being motivated because of a disease problem, there is work being done in this area anyway, from which we might expect some benefit in the near future?

Dr. Bulmer: Yes, although not specifically within Agriculture Canada. Agriculture Canada, however, is collaborating with industry and tracking the progress in this aspect.

Senator Hays: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Brightwell: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could add to the discussion. In the years that I have been in practice in veterinary medicine I have heard consistently that, if only we had a national identification scheme, we could then learn the trends of diseases of all kinds for the benefit of both animal health and human health. Suddenly, now, this bill has offered this to the people looking after animals in Canada, and I think it is probably one of the most exciting parts of the particular bill. I stimulated the witnesses to answer the questions that you were hearing and seeing on the record. The Animal Health Division has many trained epidemiologists, and I

believe, as do the deans of the veterinary colleges, that if we have a system of identification we can, in fact, put in place a disease study that will have huge, cost-effective benefits for the animal population.

I wish to go one step further. In days gone by, under the brucellosis and tuberculosis programs, most animals carried an ear tag. The government, the practitioners, and the farmers were successful in eliminating both of those diseases, so now few animals have ear tags and we have no method of identification of animals that is routine or easy to follow. I believe that as soon as we get an electronic device that can be used for disease purposes, for health purposes, for feeding purposes, and for breeding records, it will have massive application. The Holstein-Friesian people seem to be leading the way in the industry in this regard.

Senator Hays: Thank you, Dr. Brightwell.

Senator Corbin: I have one or two questions. Is this the legislation that covers the importation of, shall I call them, hobby animals, such as dogs, cats, birds, fish and so on?

Dr. Peart: I think the answer to that question is yes, in one way. There is another type of legislation, the CITES legislation, which is for endangered species. Our legislation covers the importation of dogs and cats insofar as they might have health problems, and specifically to prevent them bringing in rabies.

Pet birds are covered under our act, in addition, to prevent the entry of a disease called Newcastle's disease, which could have a tremendous economic impact on our poultry industry. It is, once again, a disease that spreads very rapidly and has a high mortality rate, so permits are issued for most animals.

In the case of dogs and cats, no permits are issued. Most animals from the United States are controlled, because they have to have health certification, but not permits.

Senator Corbin: What about, shall I call them, aquarium life forms, such as fish, lizards, turtles, and that sort of thing? Are they covered by this legislation?

Dr. Peart: Fish specifically are not controlled under our act at this point in time. Turtles are controlled, because they can bring in a disease called salmonella, which you may recognize from current media attention as a food-borne disease, but it can also be borne in water. At one point in time turtles imported from the United States were causing a number of cases of salmonella in children. So turtles are controlled.

The other forms of amphibians and reptiles are controlled, depending on their point of origin and on what disease risk either they or their packing might bring with them into Canada. There are some that are required to have permits.

Senator Corbin: You say they are controlled at the point of origin, or the point of shipment. Is that control exercised by Canadian officials or by nationals?

Dr. Peart: No. Each case depends on the specific animal, the specific species, and what disease risk it represents. In some cases we require a permit from Agriculture Canada containing specific conditions, and that would inform the