

It also provides authority for the government to go into other countries where our veterinarians are needed to assist in the control of diseases which might spread to Canada. It gives them legal authority to do that. The instance was cited when, a few years ago, it would have been beneficial for Canada to be able to assist one of the Caribbean islands in the control of African swine fever. That kind of authority is provided for in this legislation even if the funding for it might come from CIDA or some other international development agency. That kind of international assistance would not only assist the host country but would be beneficial as well to the protection of the health of our livestock industry.

As with Bill C-67 there is a provision for cost recovery. Obviously the Minister of Finance had great responsibility in the writing of this bill to ensure that the government gets its pound of flesh. We think that that is counterproductive. When it involves the general health and control of disease in the country where specialized services are being provided for the industry for export purposes, we have no problem with such cost recovery arrangements.

This bill provides as well for part-time inspectors to assist the full-time employees of the Department of Agriculture in carrying out the mandate of this legislation. I think that is a step forward.

Casual veterinarians have worked for years with major diseases such as brucellosis and tuberculosis. Those diseases have largely been overcome in this country. Thus there is not the need for those people to control those particular diseases, but the arrangement of integrating full-time Government of Canada veterinarian inspectors with the private practitioner was a useful arrangement. This bill provides for that.

It also provides for a data collection system for national immunological studies, something which was strongly supported by all sectors of the livestock industry. It is supported by those of us in the opposition.

It also makes provision for the control and regulation of diagnostic laboratories and research facilities.

All in all, we in the Official Opposition find the legislation to be a definite step forward. We did make a couple of amendments to it in committee to ensure that where animals were being inspected for health or disease

it would be a veterinary inspector who would carry out that inspection and not a lay person.

We made an amendment as well to the French version short title to call it an act for the health of animals rather than the prevention of disease in animals. That was suggested by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association because it thought it would cause less conflict with the name that is used in similar legislation in the province of Quebec. I think it was a useful suggestion.

Those are many of the provisions of the bill. We think we have had a pretty good review of the provisions of it in committee. It should be useful in moving our whole livestock industry into the 21st century, with the new technologies that have become available for surveillance and development of the livestock industry. We support it and want to see it ultimately implemented.

• (1630)

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with companion bills.

This one deals with controlling the spread of infectious diseases and the control of diseases among animals. There are only a few things that I would like to say about it.

This is an important bill to the public at large. It covers not only diseases that Agriculture Canada with its Veterinary Services and its Health of Animal Branches monitors. There are those that create economic harm to farmers and the food production chain, such as hoof and mouth disease, blue tongue, Newcastle's disease in poultry or swine cholera. That is just a very short list. We could make it into an extremely long one.

Those economic diseases are extremely important to consumers in that, without their control, we would find it somewhat difficult to get the cheap food that we are used to at the meat counter. I know some consumers bristle at that phrase, but it is cheap food. Relative to the rest of the world, Canadians are buying extremely cheap food at the retail counter.

In addition, there are the diseases that are shared by animals, whether human or of another species. These are the ones with which Health of Animals and Agriculture Canada are very much involved. Rabies can be contracted by humans just as easily as our little mammal friends. Tuberculosis and brucellosis, which is sometimes called Bang's disease and which shows itself in humans