

Foot-and-mouth disease

Mr. Diefenbaker: It is certainly inadequate.

Mr. Gardiner: Then as to the other question about the time, this is one of those diseases which, as has been indicated in the statement, we have never had in Canada before. But on previous occasions we have had the other malady which is not so serious; that is, on different occasions we have had the disease known as stomatitis and it has been dealt with without any difficult results arising. The first diagnosis of the disease in Saskatchewan was that it was 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.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Who made the final decision?

Mr. Gardiner: The final decision was made at our plant in Hull.

Mr. Coldwell: Who is the chief authority in Saskatchewan?

Mr. Gardiner: It is the veterinarian who is at Saskatoon in connection with the university. I am not just certain as to which one it was who made the pronouncement. I think it was Dr. Fulton, but I would have to check that. I received the announcement when I was in Vancouver, and it made me feel a little bit better to read it in the newspaper.

Mr. Coldwell: That announcement was from your department?

Mr. Gardiner: No; it was from the university authority at Saskatoon where the virus is sent to be checked by those authorities who are in a position to check it and who have the facilities to do so. Most of our checking in Saskatchewan is done at the university, I think, at the farm there. This checking was done in connection with these cases. When it comes to dealing with the matter finally in order to determine whether it is foot-and-mouth disease, there is only one way in which it can be finally determined, as I understand it. We have international regulations which provide that certain serums are developed in certain places only, because the indiscriminate utilization of them will sometimes do more harm than good. My understanding is that the serum which makes the blood test possible is provided in Great Britain. When, in the minds of those who were investigating the matter,

[Mr. Gardiner.]

it was thought possible that this might be foot-and-mouth disease, they at once went to the area and obtained samples of the virus, brought it back here and at the same time sent to Great Britain for the serum.

Mr. Diefenbaker: When was that?

Mr. Gardiner: That was last week. As I understand the process, the virus is injected into the animals, then the serum is also injected, and it is the bringing together of the two in the same animal which proves definitely whether or not the malady is foot-and-mouth disease. That process all had to be gone through before a definite statement could be made, and it was made last Sunday as a result of what took place on Saturday. That is the reason for any delay that took place.

Mr. Coldwell: When was the first suspicion entertained that something untoward had occurred?

Mr. Gardiner: The first time that the disease known as stomatitis was discovered was, I think, on November 26; and it was constantly dealt with from that time right on.

Mr. Argue: Might I be permitted to ask the Minister of Agriculture a rather different supplementary question? I believe that one of the things about which cattle producers are most concerned now is the fluctuating market as a result of the disease and the banning of exports of cattle to the United States. Are the minister and the government watching the situation so that, under the emergency powers legislation, steps might be taken to stabilize both cattle and meat prices if this situation continues?

Mr. Gardiner: The government is checking every possible development in connection with the whole matter, and is considering it in relation to what is being done elsewhere which affects our markets here.

Mr. Coldwell: Will the minister tell me when the federal investigation of this disease was first made? Something was discovered on November 26. But when was the suspicion aroused and action taken to investigate whether this virus was of the foot-and-mouth type or not?

Mr. Gardiner: I understand that when the disease developed on his place Mr. Waas reported it to his own veterinarian. His own veterinarian was sick at the time and prescribed only over the telephone. My understanding is that the animals reacted to the treatment as though it had been stomatitis and that it cleaned up very much more quickly than they thought would have been the possibility with foot-and-mouth disease. As the result of that they were rather