

Government Orders

government decides that affected animals should be treated rather than destroyed.

The legislation continues to allow for control of places where animals are assembled or sold. Control of artificial insemination and embryo transfer units will continue. The existing act's powers to regulate animal dead yards and rendering plants are maintained.

Provisions dealing with hatcheries and the improvement of poultry have been incorporated into this bill as well. These are not just based on the control of disease but also on the quality and genetic improvement of poultry. Penalties for contravening the provisions of this bill have been updated to reflect present economic realities. Fines for summary conviction offences can run up to \$50,000. Where an indictable offence is involved, penalties can go as high as \$200,000 and/or up to two years in jail.

The new provisions will permit agriculture inspectors to issue tickets in less serious cases and this will avoid the expense of long court proceedings for those who wish to plead guilty to minor infractions.

In summary, the health of animals bill represents an important tool to keep our animals healthy, productive and competitive and to safeguard the human population against the spread of disease or toxic materials from animals.

• (1620)

A number of industry representatives appeared as witnesses before the legislative committee on Bill C-66. While all were generally supportive, minor amendments were made to the bill at committee stage in response to their concerns. We believe that these changes will help to strengthen further the legislation for the agri-food industry and Canadians as a whole.

I am confident that this bill will receive their full support.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I just have a couple of words to say on third reading of Bill C-66. The bill received fairly extensive study in the committee.

It is an important piece of legislation that has not been amended since 1974. Of course, just as we saw with the plant products protection bill, many things have changed since that time in terms of international travel and the movement of animals around the world.

This bill provides for greater protection for animals. It is designed to control, eradicate or prevent entry into Canada of diseases of animals which is an important move both in terms of human health and economic impact for our livestock industry.

It really broadens the scope of the Department of Agriculture in regard to animal diseases. The old legislation was primarily directed toward infectious diseases such as Newcastle's disease in poultry, rabies in animals, and hoof and mouth disease in livestock, diseases of that nature, whereas this legislation moves beyond that to cover all livestock diseases, especially the contamination of livestock with toxic substances such as PCBs. These are problems which have been with us virtually forever. But over the last five or ten years we have come up with the diagnostic techniques to test for contamination by toxic substances in milk, meat, eggs or poultry products. Thus we really require this additional scope.

Diseases such as salmonella which are not necessarily that harmful to poultry can be extremely harmful to human beings and cause all kinds of illnesses. This bill extends the mandate of the Department of Agriculture to a much broader scope of diseases affecting human health as well as animal health.

This legislation gives the government a great deal more power to enforce control zones. If we had a major industrial accident, as has occurred in other parts of the world, it seems that this legislation would give the Governor in Council and the Minister of Agriculture great powers to control the movement of animals and people into an area which had become contaminated or infected. We hope that that will never occur. The outbreak of foot and mouth disease which occurred in 1951 cost the Canadian livestock industry something in the order of \$1 billion. This bill gives the minister and the government greater powers to deal with that kind of a national emergency.

It puts in place a regime for a national identification system. Technology has moved to the point where, with electronic scanners, animals can be easily identified on a permanent basis. It is valuable in the long-term control of diseases to be able to identify the farm where infected animals are raised, as well as to identify where the meat product or other product was produced.