

Government Orders

tube issue is one that has caught our attention in the past as a result of problems at border crossings.

• (1230)

When it comes to meat or livestock inspections at the border, there are also problems. The fact is that Agriculture Canada is recommending that steps be taken, and I think I mentioned some of those specific steps, to ensure that appropriate inspectors are available, at least on an on-call basis.

I think it is fair to say that we should be designating certain border crossings as those crossings where livestock crossing take place with appropriate and adequate inspection services available at all times. I think the international transportation of livestock products and live animals is sufficiently problematic that this is a safety precaution that we ought to consider. This will be one of the points that will be raised when the matter gets to committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): First of all, Madam Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to congratulate you and wish you good luck in your new duties as Chairman of the Committees of the Whole House and Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons.

[*English*]

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak today on Bill C-66, the Health of Animals Act.

I know that Canadians, and especially our agricultural producers, are proud of the fact that Canada has one of the best animal health records in the world. Our country has managed to avoid experiencing some of the very serious outbreaks of animal diseases to the extent sometimes witnessed in other nations. This success is due in large part to the commitment over the years of Agriculture Canada, national and provincial organizations and individual producers to be ever vigilant in the fight against animal diseases.

The establishment of preventive measures and detection procedures have played a major role in maintaining our animal health record. However, as the case of the so-called mad cow disease currently being encountered

in England proves, we must continue to do all we can to avoid such a devastating outbreak of animal disease.

A large outbreak of disease would not only have an impact on farmers, but could also be a potentially serious health hazard to the public. In addition, a large outbreak may affect the high reputation of quality that our agricultural exports enjoy abroad. Therefore, it is necessary to create the most prudent and efficient measures we can to protect human health in this vital industry.

Madam Speaker, Bill C-66 proposes to improve upon Canada's ability to detect and control diseases and toxic substances which may affect animals or be transmitted by animals or animal products to humans. The bill also provides for the strengthening of Canada's ability to prevent the importation of animal disease, while at the same time preventing, controlling and eradicating any outbreak of disease which may indeed pose serious health risks to Canadians or create economic difficulties which result from them.

The objectives of Bill C-66 are certainly worthy of support, both by members in this House and throughout the Canadian agriculture community.

There have been cases where animal diseases have surfaced both in terms of the disease being brought into Canada or it being domestic in origin. In some of the more severe cases a number of animals had to be destroyed. Only the quick action taken by farmers and agriculture officials prevented the spread of these diseases.

In terms of disease threatening our exports, everything must be done to ensure that Canada does not sell infected animals abroad. Certainly, for us to transport a disease to a country or, even worse, to a country that does not have a history of that particular disease, the damage would be considerable in both financial and product reputation terms. The only policy is to be as sure as possible that our exports are disease free.

Bill C-66 provides a number of measures that would be helpful in efforts to combat domestic and foreign animal diseases. In Canada, the bill enables the Ministry of Agriculture to designate qualified animal inspectors and to provide them with appropriate powers to execute their duties effectively.