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>Subject: RE: national animal welfare bill

>Date: Tue, 8 Nov 2005 16:37:33 +1100

In regards to the treatment of animals on farms the major cause can be directly linked to high cost involved in farming with the combination of the drought, and the lower income caused by the increase in sales fees at market and the collaboration of buyers at auctions with intent to lower the majority price of stock .

The current level of taxation involved in agriculture and the rising cost of all rural equipment and chemicals when combined with diminishing returns for produce caused by increases in fuel and the transport costs of goods both to and from regional areas.

The increase in city based investment groups or individuals buying land at inflated prices that lower the practicality of farming.

Unless the government will start taking responsibility and either provide subsidies or rebates for farmers and transport drivers in order to make the livelihoods more viable and secure.

This bill could result in large scale devastation of the rural industry and the towns they support. It is easy to forget that farmers are the 5% of the population that feeds the other 95% while having one hand tied behind their back if they battle on regardless if you would seriously like to stop animal cruelty then a better start would be to stop the importation of cheap foreign products from SE Asia and other areas where there are no laws in effect (or enforced) in order to provide any alleviation of animal suffering or prevent cruelty at all. The cost of cheap labour will keep these prices below any thing that we can hope to reach and subsequently force us to cut any corner in order just to remain even remotely viable.

The deregulation of agricultural industries in Australia is the worst offender as it only serves to help the buyers, processors and retailers increase their profit margin not the farmers, transport operators and consumers. If the government would take the responsibility to stabilise the agricultural industry in Australia, then it needs to start by setting prices with both a minimum and maximum amount per crop or animal in order to provide farmers with the ability to plan long term without fear of sudden crashes in the market or artificial shortages designed to keep store prices at a premium.

If farmers can plan long term then only then can they start to consider new practices and strategies to promote a better safer and more humane industry but as long as they have to chase fleeting profit margins animals will come off second best to human needs.

The control of feral animals in Australia is a major problem both environmentally and financially in order to save our diminishing native flora and fauna there needs to be changes in the way the government deals with the environment.

At present the cost of protecting our environment is of more import then doing the right thing by the ecosystem as so few people actually make use of the remaining wilderness it will always come off second best to other concerns.

The current methods to control feral animals is flawed as there is nothing cruller then the baiting campaign presently in use by the government bodies at present, it is based on body weight and cost effectiveness system that uses poison and can take days to kill some animals. The aerial baiting system is the worst offender with baits being thrown out the back of planes with no regards as to what animal can take them.

The best method by far is by trapping with either cages or "soft jaw" leg hold traps so no non target species are harmed or injured and target species can be immediately euthanized with little stress as possible as opposed to lying down for hours waiting for death in pain.

The best option viable is by using properly licensed Australian hunters to control feral animal numbers in remote areas.

By opening wilderness areas to licensed persons by means of a user pay system as used in other countries where by funds for licences can be utilised to control weeds and erosion and other such environmental problems in our wilderness areas so that instead of being a money sink they can become more self-sufficient.

By doing this we can return habitats for our threatened native species at a subsidised rate and re-channel funds from the more distasteful methods of animal control into rejuvenating our wilderness areas.

We have to move away from the current problem of closing of areas and letting feral animals and weeds take over from the native species in these last few remaining pockets of wild Australia and return them back to a state where our native flora and fauna can breed and flourish without suffering from the mistakes of our past.

If we don't act now and save what's left and just let it sit unused and uncared for we risk loosing that which is Australia Beautiful Rugged and the most unique and diverse country in the world.