FOOTROT, DESTOCKING ORDERS

1.   Mr RIPPER to the Minister for Primary Industry:

Notice of this question was given at 9.15 am. I ask -

(1)   Were two destocking orders for Mt Barker properties revoked on 3 April 2000?

(2)   Were those two orders prepared less than two weeks earlier, on 22 March 2000?

(3)   In each instance, why were those orders revoked after such a short interval?

(4)   Did the minister intervene in any way to cause the retrieval and/or revocation of either or both of these orders?

(5)   If so, what were the circumstances of that intervention?

Mr HOUSE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

(1)-(5)   The strain of footrot with which we are dealing in this State was introduced by Laurie Connell about 12 or 14 years ago, just after he had been appointed by the then Labor Government to chair the former meat industry authority in this State, and it has cost farmers in this State millions of dollars. When we came into government, we set out to try to eradicate footrot, and a program was put in place. About 12 months ago, a number of concerns were expressed to me, primarily by people in the Pastoralists and Graziers Association at that time, about how the program was going. I met with members of the PGA. I then talked to members of the Western Australian Farmers Federation and the review committee. I then spoke to the Executive Director of Agriculture Western Australia, Rob Delane, who is in charge of these things, and the Chair of the Agriculture Protection Board, Mrs Keryl Enright.   As a consequence of that, a review process was put in place. My understanding is that while that review was in place, the whole program was suspended. The review has since reported to me, and I have accepted all the recommendations. The recommendations suggest that we should continue as we were; so it is my understanding that the program is now back on track, as it was some time ago, before the review was ordered.