

SHEEP INDUSTRY - ALTERNATIVES TO MULESING

1109. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

What work or research, if any, has been carried out by the Department of Agriculture and Food on alternatives for mulesing merino sheep for implementation after 2010?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank Hon Murray Criddle for the question. I understand that the work that has been carried out on alternatives to mulesing has been carried out at a national level, funded in the main by Australian Wool Innovation Ltd, and has focused on “clip” mulesing and the physical structures. The Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food’s research into mulesing alternatives has been largely genetic. The department’s involvement, particularly centred around the Katanning research station, has been in the breeding of bare-breeched animals and animals that can pass on the trait of bare breech. This issue needs to be resolved. I know it is a matter of some debate nationally at the moment. The proponents of the plastic clip technology seem to believe that they are on to something, but it is well and truly worthwhile for the department of agriculture in Western Australia to carry on the genetic work it is doing in parallel with that physical technology. There have been some good results.