

JOHNE'S DISEASE, COMPENSATION

399. Hon M.J. CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

The Government has made two payments to producers whose stock is infected with Johne's disease.

- (1) What were the payments to each of these producers?
- (2) Where did the funds come from?
- (3) What are the guidelines for future payments.

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) No payments have yet been made to producers in relation to Johne's disease. I have approved the payment of assistance to two owners on whose properties an infected animal has been found. That payment is subject to audit by the Department of Agriculture on the completion of the destocking process of the property.

In the case of the first owner, approval for the payment of assistance was given by the former minister. I considered the assistance approved by the former minister to be inadequate, and I initiated a review of the amount and basis of the assistance. The assistance I have approved is for the cost of a farming consultant, an amount based on the estimate of the value of the stock and an amount for transport and costs in line with assistance paid under the tuberculosis freedom assurance program.

In the case of the second owner, the amount of assistance to be provided was estimated on a basis similar to that of the first owner.

- (2) The assistance for the first case is being processed under the rural assistance scheme for payment from the rural assistance fund. The assistance for the second case is being provided from the consolidated fund appropriation to the Department of Agriculture.
- (3) I have advised industry representatives that the Government will not continue to fund assistance to owners whose stock are found to be infected with ovine Johne's disease and that, consistent with the cattle industry, I would want to see an industry-funded compensation mechanism. To this end I have received advice from the Western Australian Farmers Federation and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA of their support for a levy mechanism to compensate producers whose properties are destocked in order to protect Western Australia's ovine Johne's disease-free status. Consistent with the cattle industry, compensation for animals under an industry-funded mechanism will most likely be based on the assessed value of the stock as if they were not diseased. Prior to the introduction of an industry levy mechanism the Government will consider assistance for any other cases of OJD that may occur on a case-by-case basis.