

ANIMAL WELFARE BILL 1999

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by Hon M.J. Criddle (Minister for Transport), read a first time.

Second Reading

HON M.J. CRIDDLE (Agricultural - Minister for Transport) [10.57 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Animal Welfare Bill 1999. The intent of the Bill is to provide for the protection of animals by regulating the use of animals for scientific purposes; and prohibiting cruel, inhumane or improper treatment of animals.

The Bill intends to accomplish this by promoting and protecting the welfare, safety and health of animals; ensuring the proper and humane care and management of animals in accordance with generally accepted standards; and reflecting the community's expectation that people who are in charge of animals will ensure that they are properly treated and cared for.

Members would be aware that a draft Animal Welfare Bill was tabled in the Parliament in October 1998 and members of the public and organisations were given six months to comment on it. Over 200 submissions were received, the majority of which were from the public. The Bill was revised following this consultation period and various improvements made. Many of the changes are minor technical improvements in response to public submissions while other alterations have been included by the drafters to improve the enforcement and other detailed requirements of the Bill. The Bill represents the culmination of several years of legislative development. This originally began with the convening of an animal welfare advisory committee to develop proposals for new legislation. The development of the Bill has generated considerable community interest, reflecting the importance of animal welfare in our society.

The new legislation will replace the current Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act that was passed in 1920. Since the introduction of that Act, enormous changes have taken place in the use and handling of animals which have significant implications for their wellbeing. In addition, in recent years there has been a considerable change in community attitudes and expectations relating to the care and humane treatment of animals. Some of the more significant provisions in the Bill now before the House include -

- a substantial increase in the level of penalties for cruelty offences. They have been increased from a maximum of \$5 000 or 12 months' imprisonment to a maximum of \$20 000 - with a \$1 000 minimum - and 12 months' imprisonment;
- providing for a greater range of offences;
- provisions for the issuing of infringement notices;
- increased powers for inspectors to go onto property and apprehend offenders;
- new statutory requirements for establishments which use animals for scientific purposes to be licensed and have animal ethics committees; and
- regulating businesses which supply animals for scientific purposes.

The Bill is divided into seven parts including those dealing with definitions, scientific establishments, cruelty offences, the appointment of both general and scientific inspectors, enforcement and objection and appeal rights. The Bill also deals with amendments to other legislation such as the Fish Resources Management Act 1994 and the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950. For further details I refer members to the accompanying explanatory memorandum and clause notes, which I have made available.

This new Animal Welfare Bill provides a total rewrite of the current legislation and is an opportunity to embrace new laws to deal with this important subject. I thank the various organisations and individuals that have assisted with the preparation of the Bill over the period of its development. Many people have given extensive amounts of their time to ensure a high degree of general acceptance for this new legislation. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon Bob Thomas.