



PREPARED DEBATE SPEECH UNDELIVERED

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Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022

The Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 has been the principal legislative framework for animal welfare since its commencement over 20 years ago.

Greater community expectations around animal welfare, has led rightfully to demand for more humane care and use of animals, including livestock, as well for Queenslanders whose livelihood is dependent on their stocks health to retain market access with international trading partners and productivity.

In that 20-year period, without any comprehensive review of the Animal Care Act, there have been significant advances in animal welfare science which has led to a better understanding of animal biology and behaviour to assist in developing improved animal husbandry practices and reduce risks to their welfare.

This Bill provided the opportunity to modernise Queensland's animal welfare laws to reflect scientific knowledge, community attitudes and expectations, and yet have we made best use of this opportunity?

The Bill contains amendments to laws in relation to the use of animals for scientific purposes, to enforcement provisions with a new penalty for “aggravated breach of duty of care” as well as accrediting cattle procedures and prohibiting inhumane practices, such as blistering of horses and dogs, and banning unsecured dogs in the tray of vehicles. Of course, these are all welcomed.

Especially welcomed is the amendments in response to the Martin Inquiry regarding our retired racehorses to ensure the horrors we learnt of never happen again, with oversight of RSPCA inspectors included.

However, I wish to highlight some issues in the bill.

Firstly, the Bill prohibits the possession or use of prong collars. The name sounds extremely inhumane, however as submitted by reputable organisations, these collars have been invaluable in the training and rehabilitation of our four legged friends, including within the police force and military.

Consisting of segments with ‘teeth’ that are open or blunted, used as intended it does not cause injury as reported by Dog Training Queensland. As noted, any collar when used inappropriately, is inhumane, and I am sure we have all seen examples of this.

This complete ban, with no exceptions for collars with soft or rounded prongs for registered trainers to use, could lead to unintended consequences.

This includes where pets that have behavioural problems are relegated to being euthanised, instead of the many examples provided of successful rehabilitation and happy hounds and families.

Organisations that supported this ban included RSPCA Queensland and Animal Liberation Australia, however many opposed such as Dog Training Queensland, Professional Dog Trainers of Australia, the Companions and Pets Party, and Training Four Paws Australia.

An appropriate process would have been to consult with these groups, however as Dog Training Queensland reported in their submission, prong collars were not even mentioned in the discussion paper and I quote “the use of prong collars or any other restraint-based tools is in fact missing from the key consultation outcomes of the discussion paper”.

Without the needed consultation or discussion with stakeholders about alternatives such as allowing prong collar only by professional dog trainers, it is difficult to determine which arguments heard in this debate, demonstrate a way forward.

With no evidence of injuries by these collars reported, though bans for import and in other states, this should have been investigated further for clarity.

Secondly, calf roping has been part of our past bush culture as well rodeos, and when unregulated can be an inhumane and frightening practice involving calves as young as four months old.

This event has been called to be banned over many years by submitters to the Committee Inquiry including RSPCA Queensland, Animal Liberation Queensland, the Animal Defenders Office, and the Humane Society International.

And yet it is not mentioned at all in this Bill and is certainly not banned.

The reason given by the Department in the Committee's report is that they now have a ‘code of practice’ for rodeos which came into effect at the beginning of this year, which was developed in consultation with an advisory group.

This group included representatives from animal welfare groups, rodeo organisations and the Australian Veterinary Association. It will be reviewed in five years.

So while conducting a public consultation on a 20 year update to animal care legislation, a separate process was undertaken for calf roping which many were unaware of.

However a Bill dealing with animal welfare and inhumane practices should have included calf roping, it is as simple as that.

Thirdly, the Bill does ban the use of CSSP poison on feral or pest animals, however it still allows the use of 1080 poison. As the Committee report demonstrates in a chart, 1080 is still one of the more inhumane methods of feral animal control available.

One stakeholder described it as inhumane, unacceptable, and that it is indiscriminate in that it impacts a large number of species, including native animals who may ingest the poison either directly or indirectly¹.

The Committee's report discusses these stakeholder viewpoints but offers no analysis or recommendation on 1080. The Explanatory Note for the Bill does not even mention it.

With CSSP being banned, the agricultural sector will be reliant on this poison to mitigate the impacts including diseases from feral pests as well in communities where wild dogs continue to decimate stock and much domestic pets in our rural residential areas.

However for such a dangerous poison that has accidentally been ingested by much loved pets, the Queensland community deserve to know the rationale not to ban this poison in areas close to urban communities, and what alternatives may be available.

It's not clear there is any consistency about how decisions were made in this Bill.

This, and concerns around consideration of evidence, were raised in statements of reservation in the Committee's report.

¹ Animal Liberation Queensland.

Given this, it is difficult to say whether the Bill should be supported at all, however the very good elements within make it essential.

However if we are serious about the welfare of those who are reliant on us for their humane treatment, we must have all information from comprehensive consultation so that those of us sitting in this Chamber have all facts, as that is how we will make better decisions.

The intent of this Bill is greatly appreciated, however there is so much more that needs to be done.

This includes a further response regarding 1080, an interim review in 2 years on calf roping, and discussions with dog trainers regarding the outcomes from the prong ban.

In addition, efforts for our battery hens, which are also not included. Even though new national poultry welfare standards to ban battery cages have been proposed, the timeframe of up to 2036 is unacceptable, and I ask that the Minister reduce this for QLD to 5 years as part of demonstrating that we really do care about their welfare.

In closing, thank you to the State Industries and Development Chair and Committee, their secretariat, the Minister and Departmental staff, as well all submitters, especially those who fight on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves.

It is from your tireless work that we continue to make inroads into unacceptable treatment of all creatures, great and small!

Thank you.