

Submission – Cattle Tick Line Consultation

The mooted changes to the tick line and tick management in Queensland raise several issues which must be considered if a fair outcome is to be achieved for affected land owners. Any changes – and the future policy – will place a disproportionate burden on land owners on the immediate “clean” side of the line.

The Government’s preferred model appears to be to establish a tick line (with no buffer zone) and then leave it substantially to producers to regulate themselves. While “compliance” has been mentioned, there is no indication of what this means.

Property Rights Australia (PRA) believes that it would not be acceptable for the Government to simply declare a tick line – “dirty” on one side, and “clean” on the other – and leave management of the line to producers.

The following issues need to be considered:

- **Sustainability of the tick free zone:** Without active management, the integrity of the line cannot be maintained. With any line, there will also be periodic opportunities to extend the “clean” area and keep reducing the “dirty” area. This is in the interests of the community. Government is the natural leader where the aim is to achieve broad-based community goals. Leadership is not a matter of simply imposing “compliance”.
- **The cost to industry of maintaining the tick free zone:** A recent Meat & Livestock Australia review of diseases affecting the cattle industry puts the cost of cattle tick at \$161 million annually across Australia. This is a substantial cost imposed mostly on producers who are in tick areas. Any change in the tick line will have an immediate negative effect – with substantial financial consequences – for producers with “clean” properties but who are moved to the “dirty” side of the line at the stroke of a pen. Such action would be both unfair and unjustifiable.
- **The impact of the zone on property and stock owners:** Producers on the immediate “clean” side of the line will bear the heaviest burden in maintaining the integrity of the line. These producers should receive financial assistance to help carry the burden of maintaining the line. Similarly, producers on the immediate “dirty” side of the line should be encouraged to achieve “clean” status and should be financially

assisted to work towards that status. The State should also work to make State-managed lands tick free.

- **The impact of the zone on movement of stock:** Changes which include feedlots among the allowable destinations for cattle coming from ticky areas are fraught with danger. Cattle sometimes escape from feedlots and cattle leaving feedlots do not always go directly to abattoirs. This mooted change presents a high risk of spreading tick to clean areas. Creating this new risk is both unwise and unnecessary.
- **Government to shoulder its part of the burden:** The proposed tick line(s), especially the model offered in Option 3, follows the edge of areas of National Park and State Forest. Many of these areas contain wild cattle and wild deer, both of which carry cattle tick. Neither are contained effectively by normal stock fences (deer can jump over 2 metres) Land owners bordering these areas face the additional problem of insufficient clearance along fences on State-managed land. Trees which fall across fences from State-managed land allow tick carrying animals to enter the clean area and create a costly problem for the adjoining private land owner on the “clean” of the line. Government needs to work with land owners to address and manage the tick problem on State-managed land.

PRA suggests that a progressive way to assist land owners to address the tick issue would be to make loans available (e.g. to upgrade fencing) at the same rate that loan monies are available to the State. This would demonstrate the commitment of the State to addressing the issue.

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