

Tougher Disease Laws

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maintenance to protect our leading industry, which is agriculture," Clymer said. "Once we detect a problem in animals, we have to be responsive to the greater industry which is agriculture and not shy away from dealing with those animals which carry the disease."

Efforts to change the laws are in response to expressed concerns by veterinarians and industry people as to the limited ability the PDA currently has to test and condemn non-typical farm animals for car-

rying contagious diseases.

It is also an effort to take full responsibility for protecting the state's leading industry, Clymer said.

The issue came to a head recently because of a bovine tuberculosis breakout in domestic deer and elk herds in New York late last year that apparently transmitted the disease to Holsteins housed on the same farm.

Despite a quarantine on the elk and deer herd, which were then slaughtered, the farm owner was

allowed to sell at auction almost all of his dairy herd, because the cows tested negative several times for the contagious disease, and because, according to the New York agriculture and marketing agency, it has never been clearly shown that deer and elk could transmit the disease to cows.

Now New York state requires that deer must be biologically segregated from cows.

Tuberculosis has long been known to be transmissible between cows and humans.

A number of the cows sold in New York were purchased by Pennsylvanians, who last month had their cows taken for slaughter.

Confirmation of contagious tuberculosis requires the slaughter of the animal. To date, no positive results for tuberculosis resulted.

Recently, New York shored up the authority of its agriculture and marketing commissioner by passing legislation to give the commissioner the power to test any domestic animal for tuberculosis.

Several years ago a tuberculosis outbreak in Pennsylvania resulted in the slaughter of a herd of cows in Dauphin County and other cows elsewhere. The state required many months to regain its "TB-free" status, which enables cattle

marketing to occur with fewer holdups.

Dr. Max Van Buskirk Jr., VMD, director of the PDA Bureau of Animal Industry, said last month that efforts were under way to determine to what extent, if any, PDA had the authority to test and condemn non-traditional farm animals.

The proposals by Rep. Clymer are apparently as a result of those and other inquiries into the extent of Pennsylvania law.

Officials said that up until the New York problem, it was not known for certain if bovine tuberculosis was transmissible between cows and other animals, such as deer and elk.

Pennsylvania's 1913 Domestic Animal Disease Suppression Law, which gives the state the authority to prevent, control, and eradicate domestic animal diseases, does not include deer or elk, but is currently restricted to "... any equine animal or bovine animal, sheep, goat, pig, dog, cat, or poultry ..."

The proposed amendment would extend that definition to include, "... or any wild or semi-wild animal held in captivity ..."

Also to be amended would be the state's 1931 Diseased Animal Condemnation Law.

The definition of domestic animal would also be expanded, and it would also set a compensation limit that the state would pay for a condemned wild or semi-wild animal or herd of animals.

Specifically, the intended amendment for condemnation compensation is, "The amount of compensation paid by the commonwealth for any wild or semi-wild animal in captivity and condemned by the Department of Agriculture to prevent the spread of disease shall be no more than \$300 per animal or 67 percent of the appraised value of the animal, whichever is less, except that in no case shall the compensation paid by the commonwealth exceed the sum of \$100,000 for any herd of animals."

Clymer said he has recently sent out a memo seeking a cosponsor for the bill, and that he seeks industry support.

"Of course, I hope this has the support of the agriculture industry and with people in Harrisburg," Clymer said. "I hope to be introducing the bills within 10 days at most, then I will work with the chairman of the House Agriculture (and Rural Affairs) Committee to move the bills over (to the Senate)."

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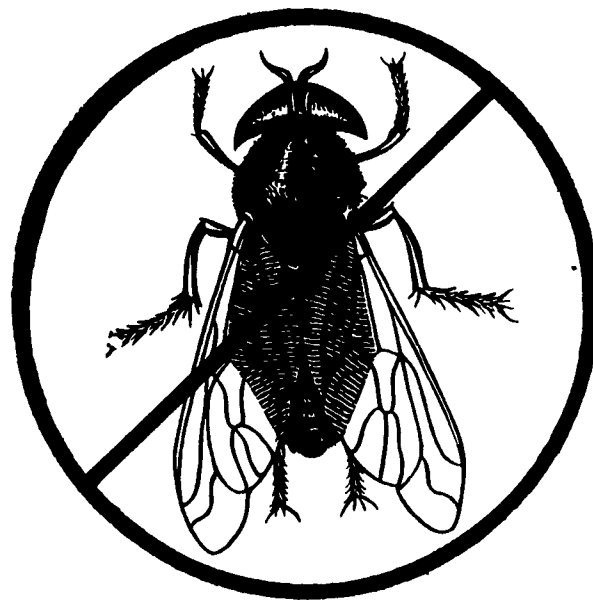
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