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MEDIA RELEASE

New Levy for Livestock Farmers (14 October 2010)

Catherine Miller, Stock Journal

The 2010-11 State Budget has become an expensive one for South Australian livestock producers with details emerging this week they will now be hit with a new biosecurity levy, in addition to the Property Identification Code registration fee.

It is part of cost recovery measures outlined in the State Budget last month which aims to increase revenue in Biosecurity Animal Health by \$9 million over four years while at the same time, saving \$1.5m. Details are still to be finalized but it is expected to be between \$165 and \$185 per property for the first two-year period and apply to cattle, sheep, pigs, deer, goats and alpaca producers with 10 or more animals. Even recreational horse owners are expected to be slugged with the fee.

The levy comes as the government slashes funding and jobs in PIRSA. Many in the industry see it as another example of the government turning its back on regional communities.

But producers are angry that unlike the \$80 biannual fee to register their Property Identification Codes, there has been no consultation with industry stakeholders before the announcement of the new fee and no consideration of the value of the livestock industries to the State's economy in the costing.

Biosecurity SA executive director Will Zacharin said the proposed biosecurity fee was required to meet the new cost-recovery targets for animal health disease surveillance, market assurance, extension, compliance and emergency response preparedness.

He said industry was informed the proposed fee could be between \$165 and \$185 depending on the number of properties to which the fee applied.

Biosecurity SA was still consulting with the industry Strategic Advisory Committee about the details of the proposed Biosecurity Fee.

"To achieve the necessary cost recovery, the fee will need to be higher from January 2013. The final figure will depend on the cost recovery model and further consultation with industry," he said.

The target date to commence both the mandatory registration of PICs and introduce the Animal Health Biosecurity Fee had been January 1 2011 but Mr Zacharin said due to delays it was highly unlikely the Biosecurity Fee would be implemented until the first half of next year because an amendment to the Livestock Act was needed.

SA Sheep Advisory Group chairman Ian Pfeiffer said it was very frustrating stakeholders were given only one option and simply being told about recent decisions such as the proposed biosecurity fee.

"We are just being told, 'your industry needs to pick up the bill'. Are we advisors or puppets?" he said. SASAG – which administers the Sheep Industry Fund – has supported many valuable industry projects but many were coming under increasing pressure including the lice, Ovine Brucellosis and OJD programs to redirect funding from previously State Government-funded areas such as animal health staff wages. Mr Pfeiffer said in withdrawing large amounts of funding, the Government was not considering the "public good" of disease surveillance, and the flow on benefits of regional jobs and export dollars generated by the sheep industry.

* Extract from a full report in *Stock Journal*, October 14 2010 issue.