

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2651

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, February 21, 2006

Title: An act relating to disclosure of animal information.

Brief Description: Regarding disclosure of animal information.

Sponsors: House Committee on Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade (originally sponsored by Representatives Pettigrew, Kristiansen, Haigh, Buri, Walsh, Linville, Kretz, Grant, Cox, Newhouse, Holmquist, Blake, Armstrong and Springer).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/11/06, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 2/21/06 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Jacobsen, Morton and Sheldon.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: The National Animal Identification System is being designed by the United States Department of Agriculture with the goal of having the capability to identify all animal premises and animals that had direct contact with specific foreign or domestic animal diseases within 48 hours of discovery. The involved species include cattle, swine, sheep, goats, poultry, buffalo, ostrich, emu, horses, llamas, alpacas, and aquaculture.

The program is anticipated to be developed so that all premises and animals will be registered by January 2008, and animal movement reporting is to be fully implemented in 2009. Programs that fit the unique characteristics of each species are being developed. Some species will involve the identification of individual animals while other species will involve the identification as a group. Radio frequency identification tags or implants are anticipated to be used for specific species.

Each state will have specific responsibilities to develop and implement specific components of the system including developing and maintaining databases. The Department of Agriculture is the coordinating entity for this program in Washington State.

Since there is no federal law that mandates that this program be established, successful implementation is dependent on enlightened voluntary action by livestock producers. There is concern that full public disclosure of all of the information needed for disease surveillance will create a disincentive to participation in the system.

Summary of Bill: Information submitted to a state or national identification system is exempt from disclosure. This exemption does not affect the disclosure of information used in

reportable animal health investigations under state animal health statutes once those investigations are complete.

The results of testing for animal diseases not required to be reported under state animal health statutes that are done at the request of the animal owner when that information identifies a particular business or individual are exempt from disclosure.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Testimony For: Many hours were spent discussing and understanding industry and media interests in this issue. The owner of the largest poultry operation called to say he will voluntarily participate in the program if the company's private information is protected. To many in the cattle industry, maintaining confidentiality of private information is key. The media wants to retain access about final actions of government agencies and is supportive of this approach.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Chris Cheney, Washington Fryer Commission; Jack Field, Washington Cattlemen Association; Jim Jesernig, Washington Beef; Rolland Thompson, Allied Daily Newspapers.