

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2089

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to identification of livestock.

Brief Description: Identifying livestock.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Agriculture & Ecology (originally sponsored by Representatives Chandler and Honeyford).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 3/3/97 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/13/97, 66-29.

Senate Amended.

House Concurred.

Passed Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Chandler, Chairman; Parlette, Vice Chairman; Schoesler, Vice Chairman; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cooper; Delvin; Mastin and Sump.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Linville, Ranking Minority Member; Koster and Regala.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background: The state's livestock identification program is administered by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). The program includes the registration and recording of brands, the designation of mandatory brand inspection points for cattle and horses, and the inspection of cattle and horses for brands and the collection of brand inspection fees, the issuance of certificates identifying individual horses or cattle, and the registration of individual identification symbols for horses. Until July 1, 1997, the WSDA may set the fee for inspecting cattle at a mandatory inspection point at not less than 50 cents per head and not more than 75 cents per head. Beginning July 1, 1997, the fees are set by statute at 60 cents per head. For

inspecting horses at these points, the WSDA may set a fee of not less than \$2 per head and not more than \$3 per head until July 1, 1997; thereafter, the fee may be not more than \$2.40 per head.

Certified Feedlots. The WSDA also administers a licensing program for feedlots. With certain exceptions, cattle entering or re-entering a certified feedlot must be inspected for brands. Until July 1, 1997, the WSDA may charge a fee of not less than \$500 and not more than \$750 for the annual licensing of a certified feedlot. Beginning July 1, 1997, the licensing fee is set by statute at \$600. A person operating a certified feedlot must also pay a fee for each head of cattle handled through the feedlot. Until July 1, 1997, the WSDA may set the fee at not less than 10 cents per head and not more than 15 cents per head. Beginning July 1, 1997, the fee is set by statute at 12 cents per head.

Summary of Bill: The reduction of the following fees is postponed by one year: the fees authorized for inspecting brands at mandatory inspection points; the annual licensing fee for a certified feed lot; the fee on each head of cattle handled through a certified feed lot; the annual licensing fee for a public livestock market; and the maximum daily total of fees that may be charged for brand inspection at such markets.

The current advisory board for the Department of Agriculture's livestock identification program is to provide oversight for the program. The advisory board must receive status and financial briefings regarding the program at least once every two months. The department must consult the advisory board before hiring or dismissing supervisory personnel.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 26, 1997.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 1997.

Testimony For: (1) For a livestock identification program to work properly, all five of the groups involved must cooperate. These are all represented on the board. (2) Livestock identification is crucial to raising cattle in open range areas. It is needed to separate one owner's cattle from those of others and to prevent theft. Rustling is a threat even today. (3) Livestock identification is also crucial to moving cattle in interstate and foreign commerce. In state, cattle must be brand-inspected or they cannot enter a certified feedlot. (4) The department has had problems administering this program within budget; the bill changes the administrative entity. (5) There has been poor communication between the department and the livestock industry. Morale

within the department is low. It is time for a change. (6) The bill will allow the industry to move to methods of identification other than brands.

Testimony Against: (1) The program has had many problems but is now operating in the black for the first time in a long time. (2) Removing the program from the department will reduce efficiencies in coordinating the program with the animal health programs of the state veterinarian and with the commission merchant licensing and investigation activities of the department. (3) The program should not be given to another state entity. It should be privatized. (4) Dairy calves less than three months of age should be exempted from the identification program.

Testified: Representative Honeyford; Neil Kayser, Washington Cattlemen's Association; Rick Vande Gracie and Jim Miles, Washington Cattle Feeders Association; Eddie Armstrong, Washington State Horse Council; Mary Burke and Bruce Cameron, Washington Cattlemen's Association; Bill Bennett, Franklin County Washington Cattlemen's Association; and Robert Dickey, Washington Cattlemen's Association (in favor). Mary Beth Lang, Department of Agriculture; and Robert VanWeerdhuzen (opposed). Chris Cheney, Washington Dairy Federation (requested an exemption for dairy calves).