

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 6204

PARTIAL VETO

C 263 L 98

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Increasing the efficiency of registering and identifying livestock.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture & Environment (originally sponsored by Senator Morton).

Senate Committee on Agriculture & Environment

House Committee on Agriculture & Ecology

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: Washington's livestock identification program is administered by the Department of Agriculture. The department maintains official recordings of livestock brands and inspects livestock at mandatory inspection points to verify ownership. The department licenses certified feed lots as well as bonded public livestock markets. The livestock identification program is funded entirely by fees paid by the livestock industry.

Since 1992, the livestock identification program experienced a negative account balance which was addressed by increasing fees for service in 1993 and 1994. The program improved its financial condition over the ensuing four years, but fee increases and administrative adjustments have not resolved the negative balance which, in 1997, was approximately \$92,000. The negative balance is expected to increase in 1998 due to a 3 percent salary adjustment, inflationary increases, and a legislatively mandated 20 percent rollback in most fees effective July 1, 1998.

The three major functions of the program, brand maintenance and recording, livestock inspection, and enforcement of livestock identification and inspection rules, has been carried out by the department exclusively.

Summary: A livestock identification board is established. The board consists of six members, appointed by the Governor, including one beef producer, one cattle feeder, one dairy producer, one livestock market owner, one packer, and one horse producer. The director is also designated as a nonvoting member.

The board is responsible for the administration of the livestock identification program including review and registration of brands, administration of inspection and enforcement activities, employment of personnel, fee setting and holding hearings and adopting rules necessary to administer the program. The board must contract with the Department of Agriculture for livestock inspection, investigation work, and brand registration until June 30, 2004. Beginning July 1, 2004, the board may contract with the department or other entities to provide such registration, livestock inspection, or investigation work. The board is authorized to provide for a central location in the state for its administrative offices.

The board is authorized to contract with Washington State licensed, accredited veterinarians, who have been certified by the board, to perform livestock identification. Fees collected by the veterinarians are remitted to the board. The board may adopt rules necessary to implement inspection performed by veterinarians and may adopt fees to cover the cost associated with certification of veterinarians.

A Washington State livestock identification account is established wherein all moneys collected or received from registration, inspection, or enforcement are deposited.

The brand registration fee is \$70 for a two-year registration period. The fee for brand reissue is \$20.

Heritage brand registration is provided. The board may adopt rules establishing criteria and fees for the permanent renewal of registered brands as heritage brands. The heritage brand is not intended to be used on livestock.

The board must not require inspection for any individual private sale of unbranded dairy breed milk production cattle involving 15 head or less. Additionally, inspection is not required for male dairy calves less than 30 days of age if sold by the owner of a licensed dairy.

Inspection fees for livestock identification are specified as 75 cents per head of cattle and \$3 per head of horses.

Horses and cattle are required to be accompanied by a livestock inspection certificate when they are moved out of the state. The board may, by rule, designate any point for mandatory livestock inspection of cattle and horses passing through that point. The board or any peace officer may stop vehicles carrying cattle or horses to determine if these animals are identified, branded or accompanied by a certificate of permit, inspection certificate, or other satisfactory proof of ownership.

The board certifies feed lots and issues licenses. The fee for a certified feed lot license is \$750. Audits of feed lots are mandatory. The handling fee for cattle passing through feed lots is 15 cents per head.

The board is responsible for livestock inspection at livestock saleyards and for administration of pertinent rules.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	42	6	
House	65	33	(House amended)
Senate			(Senate refused to concur)

Conference Committee

House	64	33
Senate	33	16

Effective: June 11, 1998

Partial Veto Summary: Two sections of the bill are not vetoed: allowing families to register heritage brands, and enabling veterinarians to be certified to conduct livestock identification.