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25th February,

1985

Dr. J. McLaughlin,
Department of Agriculture,
Box 500, G.P.O.,
MELBOURNE. 3001

Dear Sir,

REVIEW OF SERVICES TO THE INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRIES:

Having seen the report and recommendations of the Review Committee which examined the Department's services to the pig and poultry industries, the Bendigo Branch of the Commercial Egg Producers Association of Victoria is very concerned at some of these recommendations.

1. It is proposed that Greg Parkinson be sent to Melbourne within 12 months and that the provision of further poultry industry services at Bendigo should be reviewed at that time.

We feel very strongly that a Poultry Industry Officer should be stationed permanently at Bendigo.

Even though most of the biggest poultry farms are in and around Melbourne, nevertheless 40 per cent of Victorian producers are in the northern part of the State, mainly centred around Bendigo. Practically all of these producers are family farms that need the services of the Department to remain viable. It is estimated that poultry producers around Bendigo contribute \$20 million annually to the Bendigo economy alone, where as some of the big Intergrated Poultry Units within 50 Km of Melbourne do not use Department Officers - except for Laboratory tests presented by their own private vets.

This could not be done adequately from a central unit based in Melbourne. Because of the nature of many poultry problems, they have to be dealt with quickly by people with local knowledge. This will not be possible if services are based in Melbourne.

Thus there is a vital need for a poultry officer to be stationed at Bendigo.

The second point about this recommendation is that if Greg Parkinson is to be sent to Melbourne in 12 months a replacement for him needs to be appointed straight away. This will enable the new officer to get to know the district and its problems whilst Mr. Parkinson is still here.

2. The second concern we have is the delay that sometimes occurs between diagnosis of a disease problem and informing the farmer of the solution. Disease can spread very quickly in poultry flocks and delays of 24 - 48 hours can mean the difference between small losses and huge losses.

Therefore it is essential that the Department is organised to cover these situations at all times. This also includes having District Veterinary Officers who are familiar with poultry diseases and problems. In the past there have been Veterinary Officers put in poultry districts who have had little interest or knowledge of poultry. This has led to situations where losses have been higher than they should have been.

Therefore the Association would like to see the Department's services organised in such a way that these problems are minimised. North of the Divide there are more Hobby Farmers and Poultry Fanciers and Show People who travel Australia exhibiting and trading their birds, this is one way of spreading Exotic Diseases and field officers need to be in touch with people. How would a Poultry Officer in Bendigo compare with farm calls and visits when required - in comparison with a Melbourne based Extension Officer over the same period.

If there are any further points of clarification, members from our Association would be only too pleased to meet with your Review Committee, our delegates could discuss any further items at the next Poultry Advisory Council meeting which will be held ~~at~~ at Attwood.

Yours sincerely,

K. Fitzgibbon,
SECRETARY.