

Media Release

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Minister for Regional Development
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NEW LAWS TO PROTECT OUR FARMERS

The Andrews Labor Government will protect our farmers and agricultural businesses from biosecurity risks, with new legislation to be introduced to Parliament today to deter trespassing on farms in the name of animal activism.

The *Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021* will address the serious impacts of trespass on Victorian farms and recognises the significant biosecurity risks that breaches from animal activists can pose.

Those who fail to comply will face penalties among the heaviest in Australia, with on-the-spot fines of \$1,272 for an individual or \$8,178 for an organisation.

Further penalties of up to \$10,904 for an individual and up to \$54,522 for an organisation could apply for more serious offending.

The proposed legislation seeks to:

- reduce biosecurity risks and the spread of diseases on Victorian farms
- deter people from trespassing on farms with the introduction of new offences
- better enable prosecutions of trespassers and allow for the issuing of infringement notices.

Victorian farmers have been impacted by a series of events involving animal rights activists intimidating farmers, stealing livestock, and disrupting businesses.

Farmers will soon be able to implement biosecurity management plans (BMPs) which can include measures such as requiring consent from farmers before entering a property covered by a BMP.

These new measures are part of the Government's response to the *Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture*, which delivered its report to Parliament last year. The Labor Government supported 13 of the report's 15 recommendations in full.

Peak industry bodies which represent farmers and agribusinesses, as well as animal welfare organisations were consulted during the development of this legislative framework and will be further engaged as the regulations are finalised.

The new arrangements will come into effect in 2022.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"Farmers and the agricultural industry should be able to do their work without fear of being targeted by animal activists. This sort of activity is highly distressing for farming families and puts the biosecurity and safety of the animals that activists purport to protect at risk."

"Victorian farmers work hard to keep their animals safe and protect them from pests and diseases with robust biosecurity systems. This new legislation will deter behaviour that puts that hard work at risk."