

Media Release

The Hon Ros Spence MP
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Community Sport
Minister for Carers and Volunteers



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NEW LAWS STRENGTHEN VICTORIA'S BIOSECURITY SAFEGUARDS

The Allan Labor Government has strengthened enforcement power and increased penalties to enhance capability to manage biosecurity incidents and protect Victoria's world-class agriculture sector for the future.

The *Biosecurity Legislation Amendment (Incident Response) Bill 2024*, passed in Parliament this week is strengthening Victoria's biosecurity response system to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and can respond to ongoing and evolving threats from diseases, pests and weeds.

The legislation has set increased penalties for trespassing on agricultural premises, doubling them to up to \$23,077 for an individual and \$115,386 for an organisation.

Fines will also increase for not following biosecurity and traceability requirements during an emergency response, including for breaching movement restrictions under a Control Order, and for deliberately spreading an exotic disease.

Victoria Police will also be recognised as livestock inspectors to enhance their ability to effectively investigate farm crimes involving livestock theft. Inspectors will receive additional powers, including allowing them to direct vehicles in emergency animal disease outbreaks.

The legislation has also made it an offence to possess livestock whose identification tags have been illegally removed or replaced – preventing fraudulent practices that undermine Victoria's livestock traceability and access to export markets.

The administration of compensation for livestock owners and businesses impacted by emergency animal diseases has also been strengthened, ensuring fair payments tied to market value and more streamlined processes for replacement livestock.

Victoria's agriculture sector is already underpinned by strong biosecurity, but with ongoing and changing threats from diseases, pests and weeds, it's important the legislative system that protects our farms, animals, crops and plants continues to improve.

Safeguarding Victoria's agriculture sector from biosecurity threats is critical to its future – that's why the Labor Government has invested \$112.7 million in emergency animal disease preparedness this term.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence

"These laws strengthen the enforcement powers of our inspectors and Victoria Police and set out stricter penalties for non-compliance, particularly during biosecurity emergencies."

"It's critical we make changes now to create a more resilient biosecurity system for our state, which will ensure Victoria's \$20.2 billion agriculture industry continues to thrive into the future."