



BIOSECURITY ACT 2015

Discussion Paper: Cattle tick

December 2015



Photo: © NSW Department of Primary Industries

Comments on this paper close on 12 February 2016

Email your comments to: submissions.biosecuritylegislation@dpi.nsw.gov.au

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For more information

See: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurityact

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Summary

The *Biosecurity Act 2015* will repeal the *Stock Diseases Act 1923*, which currently includes various regulatory controls and powers with respect to cattle tick.

Having considered existing management arrangements and risks associated with cattle tick, it is proposed to utilise a range of tools under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. Specifically:

- Cattle tick is declared as **prohibited matter**;
- Potential carriers of cattle tick will be managed under the **General Biosecurity Duty** (GBD) with some **mandatory measures** prescribed in the regulation.

Background Information

What is the problem?

Cattle ticks are the most serious external parasite of cattle in Australia. Infested cattle lose condition because of 'tick worry' and loss of blood.

Cattle ticks may transmit the organisms that cause 'tick fever'. This disease can be lethal to susceptible animals. Others may suffer a serious loss of condition.

The hides of tick infested animals are damaged and their value is reduced. In severe cases the hides may be unsaleable.

Although NSW is 'free' of cattle tick, infestations regularly occur in the north east of the state, adjoining the Queensland border.

Why is it important?

As cattle tick impacts the health of animals, significant economic damage to the beef and dairy industries would result if it were to spread and become established in NSW. The costs of responding to infestations are significant. Nationally the cost to the cattle industry as a result of production impacts and the costs of treatments and preventive vaccines are estimated at \$161 million. If cattle tick became endemic in NSW, there would be a significant cost burden that would be felt all through the supply chain.

What is the outcome we are seeking?

The desired outcome is for stockowners and the NSW Department of Primary Industries to work together to eradicate cattle tick infestations in the far north-eastern corner of NSW and to ensure cattle tick does not enter other areas in NSW and become established.

Current management arrangements

Cattle tick is declared to be a disease for the purposes of the *Stock Diseases Act 1923*.

This places a legal obligation on occupiers of land, owners of stock, persons in charge of travelling stock, veterinarians and other persons consulted about stock, to notify an inspector within 48 hours, once aware of any cattle tick infested livestock.

Other specific regulatory controls and powers for cattle tick include:

- infested stock is not to be sold;
- a restriction on the importation, introduction or bringing of stock and fodder from Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia into NSW (see [Proclamation 540 - Cattle Tick](#));
- restrictions on vaccinating stock with tick fever vaccine (clause 69 of the *Stock Diseases Regulation 2009*).

If stock are found to be infested with cattle tick, inspectors will work with affected landholders to eradicate the infestation. This usually involves accepting an undertaking from the owner of the infested property that includes the necessary agreed movement restrictions and control actions to eradicate the infestation. In cases where an undertaking cannot be agreed, the land will be placed under quarantine with movement and treatment requirements imposed on the owner or occupier of the quarantined land.

Adjoining holdings and properties in common management with the infested holding are also the subject of undertakings or quarantine.

Proposed management under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015

Cattle tick has been declared as **Prohibited Matter** under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. It is proposed to further manage the risk of cattle tick in NSW using the **General Biosecurity Duty** (GBD) and prescribing some **Mandatory Measures** in the regulation in relation to potential carriers of cattle tick.

Prohibited matter

Prohibited matter is tightly regulated, and it is an offence to deal with it in any way other than under the most limited and controlled circumstances. It will be an offence to possess or 'deal with' prohibited matter, which would include selling or moving cattle infested with cattle tick. The presence or suspected presence of prohibited matter will also be notifiable. Significant penalties apply for prohibited matter offences.

Once an authorised officer knows or suspects that there is an infestation of cattle tick on a property, he or she may accept a **Biosecurity Undertaking** from the owner or person in charge (and adjoining property holders) or issue a **Biosecurity Direction** to the person in charge (and adjoining property holders). A biosecurity undertaking or biosecurity direction will detail the actions and requirements that must be undertaken to eradicate the infestation and may include (but are not limited to) movement controls, treatment of stock and repairs to damaged fencing to prevent straying.

As eradication of the infestation is ultimately the responsibility of the owner or person in charge of the stock, if a person complies with a Biosecurity Direction or Biosecurity Undertaking that details how the infestation must be managed, they will not be considered in breach of the prohibited matter requirements.

The General Biosecurity Duty (GBD) and carriers of cattle tick

There are a number of animals in addition to cattle that have the potential to carry cattle tick such as deer, buffalo, bison, sheep, horses, goats and camelids. These animals are all carriers for the purposes of the Act.

The Act introduces the concept of shared responsibility via the inclusion of a GBD. The GBD requires any person who deals with an animal that is a potential carrier of cattle tick and who knows or ought to know of the biosecurity risks associated with cattle tick must take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the risk as far as is reasonably practicable. How you can discharge your GBD may be outlined in Industry Standards, Codes of Practice, guidelines or through other advisory or education

As the risks associated with cattle tick are high and to mitigate potential infestations in other parts of NSW, it is proposed to include some **mandatory measures** that will be prescribed in the regulation. These mandatory measures will detail what actions must be taken before the specified carriers will be permitted to enter NSW. They must be complied with for a person to discharge his or her GBD.

The proposed mandatory measures will be similar in nature to current requirements and will:

- restrict the entry into NSW of those potential carriers unless they have been isolated for a specified period of time, have undergone approved treatment, have been inspected by an authorised officer or have been otherwise authorised for entry into NSW;
- require appropriate certification with regard to the above measures.

Fodder

It is proposed that the importation of fodder into NSW will be managed under the GBD. That means the onus will be on those sending fodder into NSW to ensure it is free of cattle tick and for those receiving fodder to undertake appropriate due diligence with regard to its source and treatment.

Tick fever vaccinations

As cattle that are vaccinated against tick fever constitute no risk to other cattle in NSW, it is proposed that there will be no restrictions on the use of this vaccine (other than in accordance with proper usage). Whether a producer chooses to vaccinate may be determined by a number of factors including perceived risk to their herd and market access. This is not an issue where government regulation is required.

What do you think?

We value your comments on how we can improve our biosecurity system and look forward to receiving your input into this important process.

Please complete the following survey on 'Cattle Tick' at:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/cattle_tick.

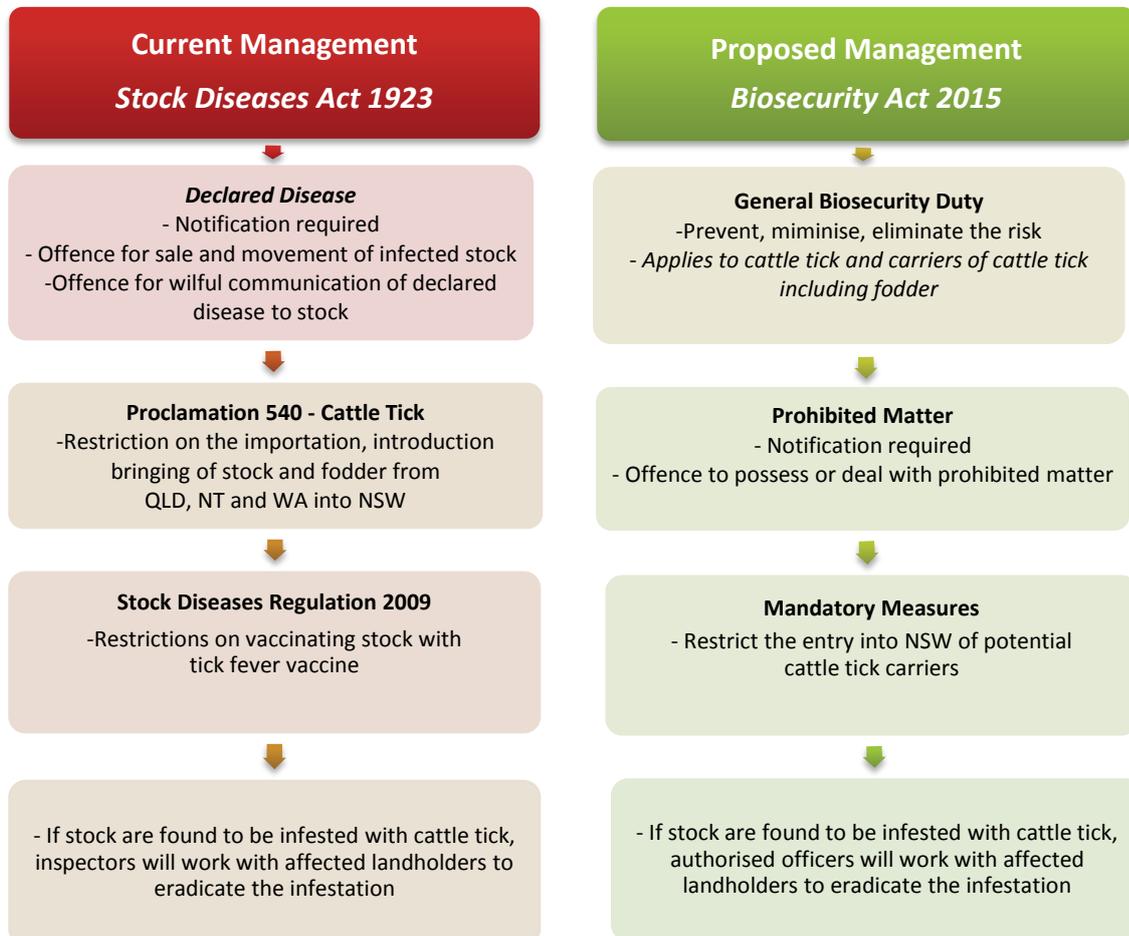
Alternatively, submit your feedback **by Friday, 12 February 2016** via [email](#) or post to:

Biosecurity Act 2015
NSW Department of Primary Industries
Locked Bag 21
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For more information about the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and regulatory framework, please visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurityact.

Appendix 1

Summary of current and proposed management of cattle tick



Appendix 2

This is a hypothetical scenario of how cattle tick might be managed under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and is provided for consultation purposes only.

