



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Minister for Agriculture

Tuesday, 21 April, 2009

ELECTRONIC SHEEP TAGS DOWN TO A DOLLAR

The Brumby Government is providing further assistance to Victoria's sheep and goat industries to assist them move to the enhanced National Livestock Identification System (NLIS - sheep and goats).

Agriculture Minister Joe Helper said the price of electronic NLIS (sheep) tags would fall from \$1.35 to \$1 per tag effective immediately.

"The Brumby Government is taking action to support Victoria's sheep producers by reducing the price of electronic tags which have dropped from \$2.50 in September 2008 to today's low price of \$1," Mr Helper said.

"These electronic tags will strengthen Australia's reputation on the international export market, boosting future job opportunities within industry and provide better protection for Australia against sheep-borne diseases.

"Therefore it is important we make the price of these tags as affordable as possible and the Brumby Government has worked with industry and tag producers to reduce the price of these tags for Victoria's farmers even further."

Mr Helper said the livestock-spread Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak that occurred in the United Kingdom during 2001 crippled the country's beef, dairy, pork and sheep industries as well as costing huge amounts of money to contain.

"The implications of having untraceable sheep in a Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in Australia are enormous," he said.

"The sheep industry now recognises that enhancements are needed to the NLIS (sheep & goats).

"As a result, the industry lead body responsible for food safety policy in Australia's red meat industry, SAFEMEAT, has recommended that mob-based movement recording and transaction identification be introduced throughout Australia from July 1, 2009."

Mr Helper said for producers, transaction identification may impose inconvenience and additional expense because it means that each owner in the life of a sheep will need to attach an additional visually readable ear tag.

"SAFEMEAT however has agreed that if an electronic NLIS (sheep) tag is used by the breeder and the tag is scanned and the movement recorded on DPI's database, then the purchaser will not need to attach an additional tag, when that sheep is again sold," he said.

"Lamb finishers form a significant part of Victoria's sheepmeat supply chain. It is clear that they will not want to tag every lamb they buy and the Brumby Government is taking action to ensure producers within the supply chain have the option of using a single tag rather than multiple tags on each animal.

"This measure proves that Victoria is a leader in the implementation of electronic NLIS technology.

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“In addition, wool growers and sheepmeat producers will still be able to apply for a Brumby Government dollar-for-dollar grant of up to \$2500 until June 30 to assist with the purchase of readers, software and technical support if they chose to use electronic NLIS (sheep) tags as a flock management tool.

“The Brumby Government has already committed \$1 million to support the voluntary use of electronic identification technology.”

Mr Helper said Victorian sheep saleyards would also be invited to lodge expressions of interest for funding to assist in installing infrastructure for the scanning of electronic NLIS (sheep) tags.