

THE RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT

INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSE OF FATALITY AND INJURY ON VICTORIAN FARMS

To the members of the committee.

Firstly I would like to introduce myself to those members of the Committee that don't know me and to give a brief outline of my work in agriculture, why and how I became involved in Farmsafety and my reason for this submission.

Michael John Blake

My present employment is that of Executor and Working Manager of "Bally Glunin Park" at Hamilton. Bally Glunin Park is a property of 1800 HA of grazing and farming land running 15,000 DSE'S. As a grazing business it produces prime lambs, yearling beef, fine-superfine merino wool, grain and fodder.

The property produces 31,000kgs of weaner beef, 30,000kgs sheep meat, 36,000kgs prime lamb, 44,000kgs wool, 250,000kgs grain and 231,000kgs fodder.

As this property is prominent in its agricultural and research achievements, many groups call upon it for assistance, information input and output, and training and educational opportunities. A good public relations attitude is essential.

I have had a strong commitment to both agriculture and the community, indicated by the following organisations that I have been involved in over the last thirty years.

Past involvement's:

Judge, Elders Flock of the Year
Councilor, Hamilton Pastoral & Agricultural Society.
State Council of the Victorian Branch of the Galloway Cattle Society
Represented Australia at the World Galloway Cattle Conference in Scotland 1977
Interim Committee of the "Ross McKenzie Fellowship" & Past Chairman
VP Hamilton Technical School Agricultural Apprenticeship Advisory Committee
Board of Management of the Hamilton Base Hospital & Planning Committee
Committee of Management of the Grange Hostel for the Aged
Adviser to the Commonwealth Government in their preparation of the "Face to Face" Employment video's on Agricultural Employment
Hamilton Apex Club

Present Involvement's:

Chairman & Trustee of the "Ross McKenzie Fellowship"
This Fellowship makes awards to support work within the wool sheep industry

Founder & President of the Bainbridge Landcare Group

35 Year Active Service Bainbridge Rural Fire Brigade

I have an active involvement with South West College of TAFE's Agricultural Apprenticeships and am currently involved in restructuring apprenticeship training at this college.

I successfully lobbied South West College of TAFE Warrnambool to appoint a Head of Rural Studies at Hamilton, as well as the acceptance of my three year Agricultural Apprenticeship Training Program.

I developed a farm safety audit manual and in association with Workcover develop a "SAFETY MAP" manual for Agriculture. This work was recognized.

Winner of the "Victorian Workcover 2000 Award"

Hosted the “**Victorian Farmsafe Alliance Forum 2000**” at Bally Glunin Park. This was the first time the forum was held on a farm.

I continue to support the work of WorkSafe Victoria with farm safety, providing machinery and advice at field days and hosting on farm workshops, as well as maintaining a close connection with Andrew Sullivan, Manager Victorian Farm Safety Training Centre, and Ron Ruff of Victorian Work Cover and previously with David Rich and The Late Eric Young.

I currently sit on the steering committee of the Victorian Farm Safety Training Centre.

I continue to run field days on subjects such as Farm Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Quality Assurance as well as Apprenticeship Training. I am currently training one Agricultural Apprentices.

More recent activities associated with Farmsafety issues.

- 1994 Train the Trainer /Teacher Training South West College TAFE Warrnambool
Attended Front End Loader course VFF Macarthur
Completed Chemical User’s Course
- 1998 **Workcover Award, for Excellence and Innovation in workplace health and safety.**
- 1999 Prepared SAFETY MAP Manual for Agricultural (Nominated for WORKCOVER 2000 Award for this work.)
- 2000 Winner of the “ Victorian Workcover 2000 Award**
2000 Hosted the Victorian Farmsafe Alliance Forum 2000 at Bally Glunin Park
Managing Farm Safety course
- Key Note Speaker:**
Farmsafe Alliance Forum 2000
Managing Farm Safety Forum Ballarat University
- 2001 Presented a Paper at the “ip injury prevention conference 27 September 2001 & The Fourth National Farm Injury Conference,
Title “**The Challenge of Change, Farm Safety**”
Diploma in Natural Resource Management (Community Programs)
- 2001 Certificate of Appreciation, WorkSafe Victoria “ Smart Safety Award 2001” for Recognition of Victorian farmer who has made a significant contribution to improve health and safety on farms.**
- 2002 **Workshop Participant “Environmental Management Systems (EMS)** Joint VFF-NRE-CMA-VCMC workshops were to ensure a co-ordinated approach for EMS in Victorian agriculture.
Whole Farm Planning Course (Two farm members completed course)
CFA Wild fire training (Three staff members completed course)
All full time staff have completed Chemical User’s Course (5 members including family) and are encouraged to extend their training in such things as First Aid, Farm Safety, Fire arm safety, Wool handling preparation and marketing.
NRE Science Award; Finalist Hugh McKay Innovators Award
Woolclasser Development Program
- 2003 Farm Chemical Users Update

Bally Glunin Park operates on the cutting edge of change and will continue to push the boundaries for excellence in product preparation, presentation and delivery to customers. In striving for excellence we operate under a variety of Quality Assurance Programs.

ELDER’S CLIPCARE	(Wool Harvesting)
DALGETY ‘S DALCARE	(Wool Harvesting)
FLOCKCARE P 300002	(Sheep /Lamb Production)
CATTLECARE P 3000038	(Cattle Production)

GO MARK V 000001	(Environmental Management Beef Enterprise)
MSA Accreditation	(Beef Meat Presentation)
EU Accreditation 3GMUL000	(Beef Meat Presentation for European Markets)

In 1998 Bally Glunin Park was nominated by the VFF to be a participant in a pilot program between Australia Centre for Cleaner Production and the Environment Protection Authority & Tomorrow's Food Today on Environmental Management for Beef Farming. Bally Glunin Park successfully completed this pilot and continued on for complete accreditation under the GO MARK label.

2nd FLOCKCARE Accreditation in Australia

2nd Property in Australia with dual Accreditation CATTLECARE / FLOCKCARE

1st Sheep/Lambs to be sold under FLOCKCARE in Australia

1st Accredited farm under the GO MARK FOOD SYSTEMS

1st Cattle to be sold under the GO MARK FOOD SYSTEMS ACCREDITED FARM in Australia

A research project with AWTA in clip specification via LASER SCAN resulted in Highest Wool Price Elders/VP sale M31 06/04/00 SUP AAAFM 2,800c 16.1u. This was the first fully commercial trial Traditional/LASER SCAN wool preparation. This trial was to compare the financial advantages if any between preparing wool clip traditionally and presenting it for sale as opposed to taking the same clip and preparing it in half-micron increments and selling the lines at auction.

In association with Lempriere Fox & Lillie a new marketing strategy was developed to satisfy specific Italians wool processors. This requirement has brought about a rotational shearing every eight months to achieve a staple length of 70/75 mm. A change in pasture utilization to maintain this growth has also increased tensile strength to between 45 & 65 Newton's per kilotex

20% of wool clip is now forward sold 12 months in advance

Prime lambs are all sold over the hooks on contract prices and all carcass data is collected to monitor growth rates, kill yields and quality controls. All lambs are inspected at slaughter and requirement and improvements are discussed with participating butchers.

All of these market management QA's satisfied the quality and safety of our products to our end users but had no regard for the safety of those people at the preparation end, the farm. It was because of this that I began to develop a safety system on our farm. Family members, staff and contractors have always been involved in undertaking the farm work. Unfortunately none of the QA programs considered the safety of these people as they performed their farming duties. I felt that all these people should not only be protected from danger but should also be involved in the process of their own and others protection.

Using resources gained from other industries and my own experiences I began to develop a farm safety manual. This manual was a blue print of how all operations were to be done, by whom and why. This work took me two years to develop. This two years work and other experiences qualify me to present my opinions.

Some of the more recent publications featuring aspects of a variety of operations on Bally Glunin Park are,

Feature story Australian Farm Journal November 2000, Environmental Management a Key Component of Farming:

Article "**Holistic Monitoring puts farmer at leading edge**"

Feature story Australian Farm Journal January 2001, Taking Safety Seriously

Article "**Farmer's Safety Program an award winner**"

Feature story Victorian Workcover Authority Sept 2000 Edition WORKS WORDS

Article "**Practical Solutions offered at Farm Safety Forum**"

Weekly Times “**Top 100 Farmers for the Year**”

Feature story Australian Farm Journal March 2003, Genetic Improvement
Article “**Breeding Merinos to meet market specifications**”

WorkSafe, Health and Safety in Shearing Publication “**a number of safety features**”

The involvement in quality assurances programs and farm safety audits as well as good environment managements programs has enabled me to negotiate lower rates with insurance companies, lower rates on loans and a preferred supplier on all our trading products.

At present there are **11 research and evaluation projects operating on Bally Glunin Park**

Been involved in on farm research keeps the mind stimulated exposes my apprentice's to cutting edge information and allows fast progression in the areas we are researching. It also allows us to tap into intelligences and resources not available to the general farming community.

You will see from these pages that not only have I been active in implementing farm safety but also my work has been well acknowledged by Government and the media.

I believe that it is important that I present my point of view to this committee because it is based upon working experiences from a grass roots base.

Regarding the statistics and causes of deaths and injuries other official sources will provide you with current details but from my experience and in discussions with my fellow farmers I believe that there are four major causes

1. LACK OF TRAINING:
2. UNDER PRESSURE:
3. LACK OF RESOURCES:
4. PERSONAL PHILOSOPHIES:

LACK OF TRAINING

Training is an essential component of good on farm safety. I have had and continue to be involved in a number of training arenas. I believe that resources such as the recent commitment by the State Government of \$450,000 to the Victorian Farm Safety Training Centre at Ballarat is a very positive move and will support a number of farmer training programs.

Two other areas of training that I believe are of great importance involve student training.

The first is that of agricultural apprentices.

You will note that I developed a three-year course for South West TAFE Agricultural apprentices and follow its implementation but I have found that where there is a choice of minimum standard against a higher standard, the minimum standard is generally chosen. I believe that where this standard applies to subjects relating to farm safety or occupation health and safety the highest existing standard in the state should be the minimum training outcome.

The second is to develop programs for secondary schools.

Where students undertake work experience or Vocational Educational Training in agricultural fields a farm safety awareness program must be developed and become an essential component of the program before any physical involvement in a farming activity takes place.

UNDER PRESSURE: LACK OF RESOURCES: PERSONAL PHILOSOPHIES, all no doubt will be dealt with by more appropriate experts

Initiatives that I believe could be of benefit would be to development a standard on farm audit kit administered by Workcover and that is acknowledged by a farm gate sign and can be used to demonstrate to the public the involvement of the land occupier, as with Cattlecare/Flockcare and Land for wildlife. The benefits would be a

change in social policy the could lead to not only a reduction in farm accidents but a reduction in risk that could extend to some financial rewards such as subsidies to interest rates on farm loans.

Besides the training programs there are a number of practical changes that are supporting reductions in farm injuries and deaths. Roll over protection structures on tractors have saved many lives and the use of safety access platforms have the potential to do the same but there is one device that can certainly make a difference and that is the instillation of residual current devices (RCD).

I believe that these should be a compulsory attachment on all electrical metering systems. It is one device where installation is relatively simple, can be observed easily by meter readers and if installation is not implemented then the power supply can easily be terminated.

I have had first hand experience of the benefits on installed RCD's on at least three occasions. The first occasion saved the destruction of a major farm building. More importantly the other two occasions saved lives.

When the shearing harness attachment cut through the electrical conduit on the main engine board, rather than receiving a deathblow the shearer involved sustained a minor zap for a split second before the switch kicked out.

In similar circumstances I was saved by the same switch system when water ran down some timber and into the back of a power point. The safety switch was immediately activated.

I thank you for the opportunity to present my views and I would certainly like to have the opportunity to talk to the committee in person.