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Don't put our \$60 billion industry at risk

Cattle Council of Australia (CCA) has moved to reassure cattle producers that significant steps are being taken to protect the industry after the detection of Foot and Mouth Disease in Bali.

CCA President Lloyd Hick said Australian beef cattle producers were right to be concerned by the threat.

"This disease would gut our industry and can easily travel back to Australia on clothing," Mr Hick said.

"Cattle Council expects the biosecurity response to increase whenever there is an increased threat.

"Biosecurity resources must be used in the best way possible, to maximise protection to our industry.

"The steps Minister Watt has announced to protect the livestock industry so far are a good start.

"CCA is closely engaged with the Federal Government regarding increased biosecurity safeguards.

"The Government has committed to select returning flights at random and screening everyone onboard.

"This will mean more bags are opened and more items that may carry the disease inspected.

"This increases the chance of catching people who do the wrong thing and acts as a deterrent.

"People who are caught and prosecuted face fines of up to \$1.1 million and 10 years in jail.

"However, the Government should also review its on-the-spot fines that are capped at \$2,660.

"Sometimes fines of a few hundred dollars are issued, but the risk to our industry and Australian economy is in the billions.

"This is a massive imbalance, particularly when someone has deliberately made a false declaration.

"Immigration should also look at cancelling visas for people who make false biosecurity declarations.

"Increasing penalties and the risk of being caught will make travellers more cautious.

"It is better to have travellers declaring too much than too little.

"It's also important to recognise this is not the last line of defence against foot and mouth disease.

"An up-to-date biosecurity plan can prevent Foot and Mouth Disease reaching your property.

"People who have recently travelled to these areas should also take all necessary steps to decontaminate or be kept off your farm."

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