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Cattle levy increase flagged to support crucial industry programs

By **PENNY SCHULZ**

Livestock SA board member and representative on the SA Cattle Advisory Group



I AM part of Schulz Livestock, a family-owned and run livestock farming business in the Upper South East. We produce first-cross ewe lambs, prime lambs and have a stud beef operation. We love the challenge of breeding livestock and we are always on a mission to breed animals that suit the market and our clients' needs while striving to breed something better each year.

In our livestock business, we don't think twice about the \$1.10 levy on cattle tags which feeds into the Cattle Industry Fund. The fund has been in place for 15 years and I'll be honest, it's only been in the past few years that I have come to realise where our levy is spent.

Our money contributes to the programs that underpin the assurance systems that help to market our cattle. These include:

- Animal health and biosecurity programs.
- Endemic disease control programs.
- Livestock traceability.
- Developing future industry leaders.
- South Australian research, development and extension.
- Advocacy and producer representation.

It's also the fund that compensates producers who are in a terrible position where cattle need to be destroyed to minimise or control the spread of disease.

In a nutshell, what the Cattle Industry Fund is spent on is non-negotiable; we need these programs to ensure that South Australian cattle are marketable, traceable and producers have access to help monitor, control and prevent disease that could otherwise cripple our capacity to export beef.

As time goes on, the cost to run these essential programs has gone up to the point that the Cattle Industry Fund is not keeping pace with the increases. Reserves are diminishing and in a couple of years, the fund will not be able to continue its support of current programs.

I have recently become a member of the South Australian Cattle Advisory Group (SACAG), taking over from Livestock SA board member Andy Withers. The group advises the Minister on how and where the Cattle Industry Fund should be spent.

Producers can be assured that it is not one person making the decision on where our levies go. SACAG is made up of producer representatives from the pastoral zone, commercial and stud beef and dairy sectors, as well as representatives from the South Australian Dairyfarmers Association, Livestock SA and the Minister's office.

SACAG has done the sums on what it will cost to fund the programs currently supported by the fund and an increase to the levy is needed to keep it going. A 40 cent increase – bringing the total contribution to \$1.50 – is required for a sustainable fund.

In my view, losing the Cattle Industry Fund and what it does is not an option, and keeping the levy at \$1.10 will lead to fund disappearing. At the proposed new rate of \$1.50, it is still not a big cost to support the essential programs that help us to sell South Australian beef, milk and cattle genetics all over the world.

But this is only the view of one producer. Livestock SA would like to know your thoughts on increasing the Cattle Industry Fund levy. Livestock SA can compile these views and report to the SA Cattle Advisory Group and the Minister for Agriculture.

- **Details:** Have your say in a survey on Livestock SA's website, visit www.livestocksa.org.au/pages/activities/surveys.php or contact the office 08 8297 2299.