

21 March 2018

Hon Damien O'Connor
Minister of Agriculture
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

d.o'connor@ministers.govt.nz

Dear Minister

Mycoplasma bovis – Canterbury region

I am writing on behalf of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum to ask you as a matter of urgency to expedite compensation to farmers affected by the *Mycoplasma bovis* outbreak and provide certainty on future response activities as soon as possible.

As you are aware, the infection was first discovered in Waimate District in July 2017 and has spread since then to other areas in Canterbury and further afield.

Mayors in mid- and south Canterbury and North Otago are hearing first-hand of the stress, and financial distress, experienced by farmers affected by the outbreak. This includes not being able to sell stock to the expected seasonal schedule (including when not subject to movement restrictions), and contractors declining to work on affected farms for fear of being denied access to as-yet unaffected properties.

We welcome your announcement (5 March 2018) of a joint Government-industry commitment to fund the *Mycoplasma bovis* response, including additional capacity to pay compensation under S.162A of the Biosecurity Act 1993. And we applaud the ongoing support of industry (including DairyNZ, Beef + Lamb New Zealand and the Meat Industry Association) to the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and ongoing response actions.

Our immediate concern is the welfare of affected farmers and their families. We are asking you to direct officials to do everything they can to expedite the payment of compensation. **This should include making full use of provisions for MPI to make partial payment on compensation claims while a claim is being assessed.** That only 10 of a total of 51

Mayors standing together for Canterbury.

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compensation claims for the *Mycoplasma bovis* response have received any form of payment (as stated in your 5 March 2018 announcement) is compounding the financial and emotional stress affected farmers are already suffering. We want MPI to make the process as simple, and prompt, as it possibly can be, so that complex, protracted, bureaucratic processes do not add to the stress our farmers are already under.

Of further concern is the lack of clarity of ongoing response activities. While we acknowledge that it will take some time for MPI to establish the technical feasibility and cost-benefit of eradication versus long-term management, the current lack of information on long-term actions is further exacerbating the stress and fears of farmers in the region.

We would appreciate if you and your officials could **provide certainty on future response activities as soon as possible**, whether it be an ongoing plan or potential future options. This will allow affected farmers to plan for ongoing farm management activities and help relieve the anxiety and stress they are experiencing.

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum acknowledges the work undertaken so far in response to *Mycoplasma bovis*, and is willing to support future response activities where possible. Can you please let us know as a matter of urgency how as Mayors we can best work with central government and with industry, not only to respond to the outbreak, but to support citizens and ratepayers affected by it.

Yours sincerely



Lianne Dalziel
Mayor, Christchurch City
Chair, Canterbury Mayoral Forum



Craig Rowley
Mayor of Waimate District
Lead Mayor, Value-added production
Canterbury Regional Economic Development Strategy