



“It has been a test. We’ve never had anything of this nature before...”

# Talking stock of rural crime



The equine flu epidemic continues to have far-reaching implications for the Australian live-stock industry both in terms of infection control and economic fall out.

For the Queensland Police Service Stock and Rural Crime Investigation Squad (SARCIS) the outbreak while unexpected was not something they were unprepared for.

“It has been a test. We’ve never had anything of this nature before,” said Stock and Rural Crime Investigation Squad State Coordinator Detective Inspector Ian Robertson.

“We’ve all trained for it and it was a matter of putting that training into practice.”

By sheer good fortune the outbreak occurred shortly after the opening of a new headquarters for SARCIS at Forrest Hill, near Ipswich in July.

The old Forest Hill Police Station, originally opened in 1989, was recommissioned to provide central offices for the South Eastern Stock and Rural Crime Investigation Squad.

“It’s an ideal central location in the geographic centre of the state’s South East corner with officers able to operate as far north as Redcliffe, out beyond Toowoomba and down to the New South Wales (NSW) border,” Detective Inspector Robertson said.

Police officers also benefit through updated office facilities and an improved working environment. The location of the Forest Hill offices also provide greater access to police paddocks and improved travel times to stock and rural crime calls for service.

Additionally the station complements the existing Townsville SARCIS centre providing a wider service to the whole state.

When equine flu hit, officers with SARCIS assisted local police patrolling Queensland’s Southern borders to enforce quarantine restrictions.



“...the squad say their work of serving and protecting Queenslanders living on the land will continue to evolve and adapt to the changing rural scene...”

At a state level SARCIS had already put in extensive planning with the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries on the National Livestock Identification System implementation committee and the State Livestock Standstill Management Group review of standstill arrangements in the event of an exotic animal disease outbreak.

“Our officers brought unique skills to the task both in terms of their knowledge from working with horses and their specialist knowledge of legislation pertaining to the livestock standstill,” said Detective Inspector Robertson.

“We also have a long tradition of working closely with the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries

who were also deeply involved in controlling the outbreak.”

SARCIS works on a daily basis with the community and stakeholder groups such as Agforce, stock and station agents, Customs, the Department of Natural Resources, the Environmental Protection Agency, Rural Watch and Crime Stoppers to provide an effective and efficient service to rural communities.

They were among the first to respond to Morgan Park Equestrian Centre, Warwick which was quarantined at 4pm Sunday, August 26 with 300 horses forbidden to leave.

SARCIS has strong networks with other law enforcement agencies

including the NSW Rural Crime Squads and external agencies such as the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Customs, stock and station agents, Safe Foods, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Natural Resources.

“Importantly SARCIS remains first and foremost an integral part of the policing of the state,” said Detective Inspector Robertson, “and we continue to accomplish a great deal.”

Preliminary figures for the period from June 1 last year to June 1 this year suggest about \$1,281,000 worth of livestock was stolen which equates to around 3280 animals.

About 1,000 head valued at \$96,000 have since been recovered representing a clear-up rate for stock stealing of about 28%.

There were 19 reported stock kill with intent to steal offences involving the killing of 44 stock animals to the total value of \$25,000 (16% clear up rate.)

Recently SARCIS commenced court proceedings against a central Queensland grazier on charges of allegedly stealing 180 head of cattle and the squad say their work of serving and protecting Queenslanders living on the land will continue to evolve and adapt to the changing rural scene.

*Minister's message  
continued from page 3...*

*The message is finally getting through. Between March and July this year there has been a 64 per cent reduction in breaches of existing protection orders, compared with the same period last year. Let us hope that the footballers can keep it up in the off season as well.*

## CHILD PROTECTION WEEK

*Ms SPENCE: I am pleased to congratulate police who will be winning two awards after question time this morning when the Minister for Child Safety gives out awards for Child Protection Week. The first award is going to Detective Sergeant Murray Ferguson who works in the Child Protection Unit at Doomadgee.*

*He is receiving an award for the work that he has done in that community working with the elders and children at schools and the hospital on child protection issues.*

*The second award is going to Task Force Argos for its initiative of Surf Safely. Members might remember that last year in Child Protection Week Argos launched Surf Safely, which is an online education tool for school students aged between nine and 14. In the last 12 months officers from Argos have delivered their presentations to 1,900 students and distributed 35,000 Surf Safely help and hint cards. So that is a big effort by those officers.*

*Other police have also been in schools talking about that particular program.*

*Two years ago Task Force Argos launched the Who's chatting to your kids? booklet. It is this week going to launch the third version of that booklet. Members should be aware of that booklet and get them from the police if they are interested in distributing them in their electorates.*

*Also this morning I want to announce that since May police from Argos have conducted raids to execute 28 warrants targeting the possession and distribution of child exploitation images. Operation*

*Stingray has involved investigators from the North Coast, South Eastern, Metro North and Metro South regions and has resulted so far in 16 people being charged with offences including possession, distribution and producing child exploitation images.*

*Only this morning police raids have resulted in two people being charged with possession and distribution of child pornography. During the operation, more than 800,000 child exploitation images and movies have been seized. The operation is ongoing and the police will have more details on their arrests later on today.*