



# Shake-up for quarantine

By DAVID MCKENZIE

FARMERS will be consulted more effectively under a plan to strengthen the quarantine system.

Disputes over the science used to justify import decisions will be resolved by a group of eminent scientists.

And the new Centre of Excellence on risk analysis will be asked to come up with more robust techniques for measuring and assessing disease risks.

The moves have been flagged by Agriculture Minister Peter McGauran amid continuing concerns about the performance of quarantine policy-maker, Biosecurity Australia.

"We need to have genuine consultation and engagement by BA, a partnership rather than a one-sided dialogue," Mr McGauran told *The Weekly Times*.

"Quarantine scientists and officials must listen and not be too defensive."

He said the science used by BA in analysing import disease risks had to be "contestable" and any disputes properly arbitrated.



**A blight:** farmers want tighter quarantine laws

Mr McGauran said scientists, Prof Malcolm Nairn, Dr Jim Peacock and Dr John Radcliffe should do that, rather than just ensure public submissions were accounted for.

"These scientists will now perform a more appropriate role — ticking off on

the science," Mr McGauran said.

The developments follow last week's meeting on quarantine organised by the National Farmers' Federation and attended by about 30 farm representatives along with quarantine and government officials.