

Australia's Live Food Animal Exports

Australia's live animal export industry has been allowed by the federal and all state governments to self regulate since the start of the trade. Over this period all the governments involved have shown neglect for the welfare and well-being of animals right through the supply chain from farm transport to foreign slaughter. The transport, export and slaughter industries at home and abroad have done far worse and we have from time to time witnessed shocking treatment of the animals on footage taken by animal welfare groups.

The cruelty we have witnessed is endemic and the export industry, Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) in particular, has shown little inclination and will to address the various issues. MLA claims to have spent \$4 million over 10 years to improve animal handling in Indonesian abattoirs. This is a drop in the bucket compared to the amount it receives annually from export cattle levies and shows that it is not really serious at addressing animal welfare problems.

I have serious doubts that the export industry can self regulate and improve animal welfare without strict federal government regulations and independent monitoring. This monitoring must not be funded by industry but by the government through a levy on exporters or on the industry bodies so that the export industry cannot use compliant personnel to tick through the check lists. While not the ideal solution because the long supply chain especially at foreign landing and slaughter is difficult to monitor this is a rather poor second best at present.

I believe the best solution is to phase out the live export trade over the next three years while enforcing independent monitoring and then enforce a total ban on all live food animal exports by the end of 2014. An orderly phase out will allow the construction of abattoirs in the northern half of Australia to process the cattle and allow more abattoirs to be constructed in the southern half to process the sheep. This will also preserve local jobs and add considerable value in the process.

Australia should also move to compulsory pre-stunning of animals and ban slaughter while the animal is still conscious. As a developed and progressive nation Australia has to demonstrate that it is serious about animal welfare and take the lead. Nothing less is acceptable.

Albert Mah
14th July 2011