

SUBMISSION
Senate Committee Inquiry into the
Animal Welfare Standards in Australia's Live Export Markets

I consider it unacceptable for Australia to continue the live animal export trade, knowing that neither Government nor Industry can ensure the welfare and humane treatment of Australian livestock in importing countries. In addition, Industry has demonstrated it is incapable of improving animal welfare standards in the export markets to an acceptable level and as such, Australia cannot trust that any such improvements will be undertaken in the future. As such, please find following my responses to the Terms of Reference.

1. Investigate and report into the role and effectiveness of Government, Meat and Livestock Australia, Livecorp and relevant industry bodies in improving animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets, including:

a) The level, nature and effectiveness of expenditure and efforts to promote or improve animal welfare standards with respect to all Australian live export market countries.

- Investigations have shown that both the Australian Government and Industry bodies, LiveCorp and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), have failed to make any significant improvements to, or effectively regulate, the welfare of exported Australian livestock in importing countries.
- By their own admission, LiveCorp and MLA have known about the animal welfare issues in Indonesia for at least 10 years. In that time, 4.6 million cattle have been sent to this country, where an investigation undertaken this year (2011) by RSPCA and Animals Australia found that the conditions in many abattoirs were well below international animal welfare standards. Despite knowing about these poor conditions for such a long period, Industry has promised to act on improving animal welfare in Indonesia only when faced with exposure.
- Government and Industry would have the Australian public believe that the animal welfare issues in Indonesia, which have been present and supposedly unfixable for more than 10 years, have now been resolved in a matter of a few short weeks.
- Training programs in Indonesia, undertaken by Livecorp and MLA, have failed to prevent animal cruelty, or to ensure an understanding of animal behaviour and welfare. Even in abattoirs where training has been provided, multiple breaches to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) standards were observed during the above mentioned investigation.
- LiveCorp and MLA have facilitated the inhumane treatment of Australian livestock through the installation of more than 100 Mark 1 restraint boxes in Indonesian abattoirs, which have been condemned by international expert Dr Temple Grandin, who stated that these boxes "violate every humane standard, are atrocious and completely unacceptable".
- These restraint boxes are designed to forcibly trip the animal onto its side and as such, their use in Australia would be illegal as they fail to meet basic animal welfare standards. These restraint boxes should therefore be removed from all Indonesian abattoirs as a matter of urgency.
- More than \$4 million Australian dollars has been spent on the above mentioned restraint box program, which promotes inhumane and cruel restraint procedures, often causing extreme suffering and injury to Australian cattle.
- In their report to Government, Adams and Sheridan (2008) stated that "inappropriate restraint such as inverting livestock on their backs is a source of distress in its own right and will delay the onset of unconsciousness". Also stated in the same report, "the restraint of cattle in a comfortable upright position during the act of slaughter is regarded as essential for welfare".

- By their own admission, the Australian Government and the live export industry cannot guarantee that Australian cattle will be treated humanely in Indonesia, stating that the new rules are a “safeguard”, not a guarantee. In addition, both Government and Industry have admitted that pre-slaughter stunning cannot be enforced in importing countries.

b) The extent of knowledge of animal welfare practices in Australia's live export markets including: i) formal and informal monitoring and reporting structures; and ii) formal and informal processes for reporting and addressing poor animal welfare practices.

- Current Australian regulatory arrangements are completely deficient and ineffective. As soon as exported animals leave Australia, they are not protected by our animal welfare laws and regulations. Many importing countries do not have any such animal welfare legislation and as such, exported livestock are vulnerable to poor animal welfare, abuse and cruelty in these countries.
- Intensive and recurrent monitoring is vital within importing countries, to ensure that animal welfare standards are met at all times. This degree of monitoring is particularly important at the point of slaughter, and in countries which have a history of poor animal welfare. Such monitoring should be undertaken via third-party independent auditing processes.
- Monitoring schemes must ensure that personnel working in the abattoirs of importing countries are appropriately trained, have a thorough understanding of animal handling and behaviour, and a thorough understanding of the animal welfare standards with which they need to comply.

2. Investigate and report on the domestic economic impact of the live export trade within Australia including:

- a) Impact on regional and remote employment especially in northern Australia;**
b) Impact and role of the industry on local livestock production and prices;
c) Impact on the processing of livestock within Australia.

- A number of independent economic reports conducted in recent years, for both live sheep and cattle exports, have found that: a) the Australian meat processing industry has the capacity to process the livestock currently going to live export; and b) the live export trade is jeopardising the Australian meat processing industry, having a significant negative impact on its assets and jobs.
- In 2009, ACIL Tasman’s review into the live sheep export trade found that phasing out the export of live sheep would have a negligible impact on farmers and would actually result in long-term benefits for both farmers and the economy through expansion of the Australian meat processing industry.
- In 2010, a report commissioned by the Australian meat processing industry determined that the live cattle export trade was having a significant impact on Queensland’s beef industry, involving the loss of \$3.5 billion in assets, \$5 billion in turnover and 36,000 jobs.

3. Other related matters.

- The key methods used in Indonesian abattoirs to restrain animals include rope casting and restraint boxes, both of which aim to forcibly trip the animal onto its side. These methods have been shown to be extremely distressing for the animal, often resulting in physical injury and prolonged death. It can therefore be argued that these methods of restraint do not comply with the OIE standards, which state that “methods of restraint causing avoidable suffering should not be used in conscious animals because they cause severe pain and distress” (Chapter 7.5.2).
- The investigation undertaken by RSPCA and Animals Australia within Indonesian abattoirs this year uncovered many animal handling practices which are in breach of the

OIE standards (Chapter 7.5.2), including eye gouging, kicking, whipping, tail twisting and tail breaking, hosing of animals, and other forms of animal abuse.

- The above mentioned investigation also found that many personnel working within Indonesian abattoirs were grossly underqualified and had little understanding of animal handling and behaviour, which is also in breach of the OIE standards (Chapter 7.5.1).
- Using the OIE standards as a benchmark to address animal welfare issues in Indonesia is unacceptable, as they are inferior to the standards we have here in Australia. The OIE standards do not insist on pre-slaughter stunning, which renders the animal unconscious and therefore minimises its suffering, nor do they promote the slaughter of animals in an upright position.
- Standards used to process Australian livestock in any importing country should be reflective of the standards used to process Australian livestock in Australia, that is mandatory stunning and the slaughter of animals in an upright position.
- Many importing countries, such as Indonesia, do not have any legislation that ensures compliance with the OIE standards, or any other animal welfare standards. Animal welfare in Indonesia, and any other importing country, will only improve when relevant legislation is passed which promotes OIE compliance through the introduction of enforceable penalties.
- Scientific evidence suggests that the welfare of animals is directly jeopardised through the process of live export. Optimal animal welfare is accomplished when animals are slaughtered as close to their point of production as possible, in Australia where they are protected by our animal welfare standards.
- For the reasons given in this submission, I support the Live Animal Export Bill which was recently put forward, calling for the phase out of the live export trade over the next three years. Such action will allow primary producers to modify their businesses to accommodate a market, in which their produce is processed within Australia.
- During the phase-out period, strict animal welfare conditions must be adhered to including mandatory upright pre-slaughter stunning, third-party independent auditing, closed systems with supply chain assurance and permanent identification of animals from farm to post-slaughter.
- In Australia, we have legislation that protects the welfare of animals. These laws and regulations were generated because we, as a nation, believe that animals should be treated humanely and with respect, that the issue of animal welfare is of high importance, and because we consider ourselves to be an ethical nation. It is therefore, in my opinion, hypocritical that we are prepared to export our livestock to countries which do not have these same standards, which do not have the legislation to enforce the humane treatment of animals, and which have a proven history of animal cruelty involving Australian livestock.

Signed by
Raelene Trenaman
15 July 2011

References

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