

Submission on Animal Live Shipping

The recent Government action on closing live cattle exports to Indonesia has been an animal welfare as well as an economic disaster. Lifting the ban has not restored business and even with the best will in the world between all parties involved it will be a very long time before Australia's reputation as a reliable trading partner is reinstated. This not only applies to Indonesia but our other major trading partners as well and includes commodities other than livestock.

There can be no doubt that the 4 Corners program that instigated the ban was part of a campaign by animal liberationists to prevent the commercial exploitation of animals, particularly for the production of food and slaughter is a necessary part of the process.

Animal protein is an extremely valuable part most human diets and meat contains other valuable minerals that are not always readily available in a vegetarian meal. In many of the countries that import our live stock, they provide nourishment that is hard to obtain elsewhere. The industry has developed because in these countries refrigeration is scarce and the practice is either to home kill or purchase meat that was professionally killed the night before for immediate cooking.

In those cultures that arose in the Middle East, for thousands of years it has been the practice to kill animals by cutting the throat to ensure that the maximum amount of blood was shed from the carcass in the interest of extending the shelf life of the product in a hot climate. This practice is confronting to those who think meat is produced by the Super Market, but is part of nature and the food chain. It will continue no matter what action is taken by Australian Governments. If Australian live stock are withheld they will be replaced by live stock from other countries.

There is a view that the live shipping trade can be replaced by the sale of chilled or frozen meat from livestock killed in Australia. Any one with a grasp of reality knows that can not happen to any large degree. Only the wealthy few have the refrigeration to be able to buy processed meat. Indonesia buys live stock for very good reasons other than improving diet. The feed lots and abattoirs are a good industry to employ people and the industry makes use of the bi-product of the palm oil industry. The cattle convert a low quality commodity into a high protein food. Indonesia buys light weight cattle for these reasons. Australian live stock if not available would be replaced by stock from other countries some of which have foot and mouth disease. It would be an animal welfare disaster of gigantic proportions if this disease reached Indonesia in the first instance and then came to Australia.

Secondly, there are no abattoirs in Australia, north of the line Harvey to Rockhampton that could kill the cattle that were sold to Indonesia. Once there were, but they became uneconomic because of Australia's high wages and conditions and the seasonal nature of the industry. Even in the South many of the employees come from overseas on 457 work visas. With the A\$ at well over 100c it is very unlikely that new abattoirs could reopen. The loss of live shipping markets would lead to the need to slaughter thousands of live stock to prevent overstocking and starvation,

The halal kill is internationally recognized as acceptable, if carried out correctly, however in Western nations the use of stunning is seen as the best way to achieve humane slaughter. In those markets where Australia operates, much has been achieved in introducing this

technology to the industry. Animal welfare is best achieved by Australia being part of it and being able to influence change.

Australia leads the world in the standard of ships used in the trade. The standard of accommodation and feed is such that the stock thrive on board and hence the weight limit of 340kgs to ensure the cattle are still under 350kgs landed. Because we are the closest source of supply to Indonesia there is good reason for us to continue to be the major supplier. The trade will continue if we stop supply but animal welfare is best served by our participation.

Apart from the direct animal welfare issues the trade is vital to the economy of our North, including being a major employer of many indigenous Australians working on Aboriginal owned Stations. In many cases stations are the best if not the only source of environmental management providing water and control of feral animals.

In conclusion, live shipping is vital to Australia's pastoral and related industries and can not be replaced by a locally killed product. Australia leads the world in this trade from an animal welfare stand point and if removed the industry would continue but with out our influence.

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