

## **Submission from**

Edgar's Mission Farm Sanctuary

### **Preamble**

The practice of shipping Australian sheep, cattle and goats to foreign shores for the purposes of slaughter has been occurring for many years now, 30 years to the Middle East and almost two decades to South East Asia (including Indonesia).

### **Inherent problems of live animal export**

The inherent problem with the live animal trade is that Australia is unable to control how its animals are treated once they arrive in foreign countries. Many of the importing countries having little to no animal protection laws and those that do lack effective enforcement. And none of the importing countries have the same high animal welfare standards or laws demanded here in Australia. Australian animals are sent to countries which have entirely different cultures and customs to ours and as such these importing countries resent being told what to do by another country.

### **Problems of transport**

Since the commencement of the live export trade millions of animals have died on route on ships which the industry deems an acceptable loss.

Inherent problems exist in the transport of animals by sea, these include the long distance covered by sea and in many instances by land to holding facilities prior to shipment, multiple handling of animals uncustomed to this, the intensive stocking densities, lack of acceptance of pelleted feedstuffs which varies greatly from what the animals have been reared on, sea sickness, competition for space, food and water, and severe changes in climate.

Due to the intensive confinement of the animals in holding facilities and on ships it is difficult to identify those that are either unwell or not eating sufficient rations. Starvation has been shown to be one of the biggest contributors to deaths of sheep on route and the precursor to many more due to salmonellosis.

The animals are further faced with unforeseen challenges such as rejection in port of destination, ship board hazards such as fire, air conditioning failure, spoilage of feed and adverse weather conditions (which can not only prolong trips but cause illness and distress).

### **Failed attempts to address problems**

In 2006 Australia attempted to address animal welfare problems in Egypt. In February of that year the Bassateen abattoir in Cairo was shown, through investigations conducted by Animals Australia to subject Australian animals to brutal treatment and prolonged deaths and suffering, in particular cattle were seen to have their tendons slashed and eyes gouged. It is worth noting that it was not the industry who identified these problems but an Australian animal protection group. As a result trade was suspended and the then Minister for Agriculture, Peter McGauran set about the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Egypt (MOU) in October 2006. In announcing the signing of the MOU and recommencement of the trade

Minister McGauran said "Egypt had provided assurances that the health and welfare of Australian livestock exported to Egypt would be protected in line with agreed international standards". Yet in December of that very year Animals Australia was again able to document extensive breeches of this unenforceable MOU as Australian sheep suffered terribly in the lead up to and during the Eid-al-Adha, the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice. Subsequent to this, in November 2008 the Australian Government prohibited the export of sheep to Egypt, only providing for the export of cattle.

#### **Problems with supply chain assurance and the Indonesian experience.**

On 30th May 2011 Australia's most respected current affairs program 4 Corners aired "A bloody business". This program revealed a scale of suffering and brutal treatment of Australian cattle in Indonesian abattoirs never witnessed before. As a result the Federal government halted Australian animals being sent to 11 abattoirs, then on the 7th June they moved to suspended all live exports pending investigation and the establishment of supply chain assurances. The decision by the Federal Government on the 6th of July 2011, to resume live cattle exports to Indonesia came just four weeks after their decision to halt the trade. It is incongruous that the systemic problems of animal cruelty that brought about the suspension of trade could possibly be addressed in this short space of time.

Given LiveCorp's involvement on the ground, via training and supply of equipment to assist the Indonesian workers to 'humanely' handle Australian cattle that had been occurring for some ten years and the horrific images seen on 4 Corners the public have lost faith in both LiveCorp and Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) to regulate their practices. Further there exists well documented evidence that both LiveCorp and MLA knew about problems associated with animal welfare for many years yet had failed to act for meaningful outcomes.

Part of the supply change assurance to be implemented by the Federal Government is that OIE standards will be required. It should be noted that these are not world's best practices nor are they standards that meet with Australian community expectations of good animal welfare outcomes. Rather they are standards designed to bring third world countries up to a bare minimum standard of animal welfare. They still provide for slaughter without stunning, roping slaughter and the use of restraint boxes. Such boxes (designed, supplied and installed by MLA) have been condemned by leading international animal welfare expert Temple Grandin,

Already the electronic tagging system that forms part of the Governments supply chain assurance, that has been designed to track cattle movements has received criticism by the Australian Beef Association. Criticism that has resulted from the tagging systems failure to track animals here in Australia with 100% effectiveness.

That Australian officials have been denied access to Indonesian abattoirs since the suspension of trade highlights the lack of control our nation has in importing countries.

#### **Problems with industry regulation**

In addition to the problems identified above on July 13, 2011, "The Australian" reported on a vet who had been trained by AQIS to verify animal welfare standards on export ships. The vet identified problems in the recording of animal deaths and the need for moves away from self regulation and the need for independent auditors. Such concerns do little to placate the now valid concerns of Australians that the live export industry lacks transparency.

### **Recommendation**

The Federal government immediately reinstate the ban of live cattle exports to Indonesia until more effective and meaningful measures can be put in place to prevent inhumane treatment of Australian cattle in Indonesia. And to further seek an end date for **all** live animal exports of animals for slaughter within 3 years.

The three year phase out period allows farmers time to adjust to the changing market conditions.

For Australian cattle already on the ground in Indonesia and any further cattle sent prior to the three year ban, slaughter with stunning must be a guarantee along with upright slaughter and overseen by independent Australian officials.

**Pam Ahern**  
Founder & Director

