

SUBMISSION

I provide my submission in support of the continuation of the Australian livestock export industry.

In providing this submission I refer directly to the Terms of Reference that cover a range of issues surrounding the live export industry that the independent review will examine and my opinion is set out below:-

(a) The facilities, treatment, handling and slaughter of livestock, exported from Australia, in the importing country for consistency with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) recommendations and standards set out in *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (2010)* published by the World Organisation for Animal Health and other relevant standards

Australian producers have sought to ensure world's best practice has been adhered to in all aspects of the production chain. Australian companies are world leaders in showing the way in the development of leading edge transportation technologies including feeding and cleaning mechanisms on ships transporting our export product.

In addition, Australian producers have invested heavily in supplying to our trading partners world class facilities, as well as providing education and providing training opportunities.

In all of these fields Australian producers have exceeded the demands of the Terrestrial Code. It would, however, be unwise to assume that these actions would ensure that no Australian livestock would ever be mistreated. It would be foolish to expect a 100% guarantee, especially when livestock are involved with human interaction.

With recent media reports bringing to light certain activities, it is clear there needs to be improvement to the monitoring practices undertaken by our trading partners. How these monitoring processes are put in place needs to take in mind the religious beliefs and sensitivities of dealing with another country. This I'm sure can be achieved and common ground needs to be sort to deal with these issues.

(b) The adequacy of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) as they apply to the preparation and export of all livestock with consideration of responsibilities for compliance and enforcement of the ASEL

It is unrealistic to expect that producers can enforce Australia's will on our customers without formal back up and support from the Australian Government in both a diplomatic sense, and in a real sense.

Australian producers are expected to adhere to an array of regulations regarding the live export of our stock. Australian producers are seen as some of the most efficient in the world and our livestock is in demand in many countries is proof to our professionalism of our producers.

There is no question that Australian stock leaves our ports in superb condition. Hi tech transport, yarding, loading and feeding has also meant that our product arrives in top condition. I have been told cattle will actually put on weight during their journey which also proves the excellent treatment they receive.

Our trading partners are bound by their own government regulations and it is unrealistic to expect them to adhere to regulations imposed on them by the Australia government which would have only a minimal impact at best. It is unrealistic to expect a product, once outside our supply chain and therefore beyond our control, to then not be subject to acts of abuse.

Until Australia finds a way to be able to enforce our regulations in other countries who receive our product, there will always be an element of risk in our trade

(c) The types of livestock suitable (weight, age, body condition, breeds) for export as feeder or slaughter animals

Every country will have their own criteria as to what weight, age, breeds and body condition is required for their purposes.

With Indonesia they prefer Bos Indicus as this breed is best suited for their humid climate and the quality of meat suits their dietary needs. By sending these animals at a weight range between 250kg to 350kg, it gives the Indonesian people an opportunity to value add as they can place these animals in a feedlot which then provides employment opportunities to many sectors of the industry involved. Indonesia is a poor country and any opportunity that can improve their quality of life is a bonus. Jobs are made for the farmers growing the crops to supply the feedlots to those employed in harvesting, feeding and handling stock. In a country where the average wage is around \$2 per day, this can only be a win, win situation.

(d) The extent of monitoring required for each export consignment of feeder or slaughter livestock, in a manner that ensures accurate and transparent reporting to the Australian Government of the condition of the livestock from departure from Australia up to and including the point of slaughter in the country of destination

The Australian Beef Industry already has a very good system in place to monitor and identify livestock, NLIS. With a minimum of effort this system can be used to ensure accurate and transparent reporting of all livestock departing Australia up to and including the point of slaughter to the country of destination.

Equipment and education can be supplied very quickly and a system put in place that makes every animal traceable. This will eliminate any animal being sent to facilities that do not have the appropriate standards that are required by the OIE.

(e) The risk management strategies necessary to address the welfare of animals from departure from Australia, up to and including the point of slaughter in the country of destination

When dealing with any animal, no one can guarantee 100% that accidents will not happen. But we can put measures in place that will try and eliminate as many of these scenarios that we can, to get the best animal welfare outcome possible.

Beef producers take pride in their animals and want what is best for them. A quick clean death is the optimum and facilities need to be put in place that brings this result to fruition. Education and training of the animal handlers and slaughter men is essential. It is neither safe for the animals or handlers if cattle are not restrained adequately. I personally prefer stunning but have also seen that severing the carotid artery, if done correctly, is also a swift and painless death.

Facilities that address these issues should be put in place to approved abattoirs that pass OIE Standards with the appropriate education given to those who perform the slaughter.

Checks should be performed on all cattle entering these facilities that they have the relevant identification that can be traced back to their original destination.

Any backyard operators of abattoirs that do not pass OIE Standards should be prevented from receiving Australian cattle and any who breach these rules should be prosecuted.

(f) Other matters relevant to these terms of reference that the reviewer considers appropriate.

My husband and I ran a very successful Simmental Stud for many years. We have imported and exported breeding stock over that time. This was a vital part of our operation and guaranteed an opportunity to share and receive vital bloodlines that further improved our herd for a viable business. Should Live Export cease we feel this will halt any further opportunities to share genetic material with the rest of the world.

Beef cattle are just one of many animals that are exported and imported to and from Australia and the ramifications of stopping this wonderful industry will do immeasurable damage to our relations with other countries who look upon Australia to help them diversify and improve their animal herds. Australia is an island and because of this we have been able to keep our herds free of most of the crippling diseases that affect other herds in the world. This is why it is so important to be able to offer disease free livestock to nations who would otherwise not be able to access them. Also our superior genetics will improve bloodlines to help assist developing nations in feeding their growing populations.

Animal Welfare is our top priority and regulations and check points are a vital part of assuring animals arrive in good health. When we exported our bulls overseas we made sure we adjusted their diets to the diets they would be fed on their arrival to minimise any stress. Appropriate identification tags and tattoos were used to make sure the animal was identifiable. Health checks were performed to make sure the animal was in peak condition for the journey. These procedures are already in place and should be monitored by the appropriate officials to ensure that all measures are adhered to and to make sure short cuts are not taken.

We have just recently experienced twelve of the most trying years as beef producers. After coming out of a 10 year drought which resulted in us having to destock our property. We then have had to endure two flooding events which totally devastated our internal infrastructure. The financial burden has been extremely stressful and to have this event on top of it all has added even more burden to an already fragile existence. What has affected us the most is the way this whole Live Export business has been handled. No concern has been given to the rural producers and businesses involved. The ramifications and ripple effect that this has created will take years to overcome. We feel betrayed and let down by a government who seems to have more concerns for a noisy minority than they do primary producers.

With the world population expected to be 9 billion by the year 2050, I would expect that the governments in power would be doing all that they can to guarantee food security for their country. Instead today's Primary Producers are forever being bombarded by further regulations, rising costs and animal welfare issues thrust upon them by a population who has lost touch with their grass roots. We should not feel the need to be having to justify our existence all the time. What will come of this country if by 2050 our farmers have said they've had enough and this country loses the world's most efficient, hard working families who have supplied our food and fibre for generations? It will be a very sad day indeed.

Signed: Gigi Robertson

Date: 14th. July 2011

