

Submission for Australian Live Exports

Summary

I live in Western Australia and have been involved in agriculture for over 30 years. Like many other Australians, I am horrified at the cruelty shown towards Australian animals slaughtered in overseas abattoirs. Having reviewed media footages, documents, videos and comments made by people concerned in the Live Export Trade, and various welfare groups, I cannot justify the transporting of millions of animals thousand of miles overseas to suffer a horrific painful death in the hands of cultures that has no compassion for animal suffering. I believe Live Export should be banned and infrastructure build and livestock processed in Australia.

However, I do recognise the difficulties likely to be encountered by export farmers during the transitional period. The following are ideas that might be considered in the search for viable alternatives.

Considerations

One of the leading principles in producing livestock for slaughter is to slaughter animals as close to their origination as possible. This alleviates stress from long journeys and multiple transfers to the point of slaughter thus providing a better quality product. To support this principle, I have addressed some of the arguments and concerns raised by Livestock producers:

No Processing Plants

A number of abators built across northern Australia. The abs should be central to the most populous livestock farming areas, reducing the need for prolonged transport. Refrigeration units can use Solar Power and the finished product trucked, flown, shipped to market destinations. Advantages of this proposal may include:

- Workers can be sourced from the local area and/or immigration centres, providing new arrivals with employment thus reducing welfare payments
- The workforce will be distributed across the northern abs and absorbed more easily into the local culture instead of concentrated in a few larger centres
- Transport fuel costs drastically reduced as chilled meat can be distributed more efficiently.
- Current subsidiary businesses such as hay suppliers, supply agents, stockworkers etc still employed in beef industry
- New industries created to supply solar power, canning factories, leather processing, fertiliser plants etc (opportunity for immigrant investment?)
- Animal welfare standards can be enforced within Australia

Ideally the processing plants should be Australian owned, possibly financed thru local coops. The stock levy currently collected by MLA redirected to provide financial backup

Seasonal Conditions Reduce Cattle Supply to 6 months

Because seasonal conditions (ie the wet season) in northern Australia restrict the supply of cattle, abattoirs can be idle for months. With smaller plants, the overall impact will be minimised.

- Smaller workforce easily absorbed in other local employment. (seasonal maintenance of plants, hire out to stations, emergency services)
- Processing plants can take in other animal species. eg goats, camels, kangaroos, buffalo
- The effect of seasonal conditions will be localised in comparison to one larger plant
- In times of drought, abattoirs will be more accessible to process cattle to reduce stock numbers and preserve breeding stock

We are supplying food to poor countries (Indonesia)

Australia can supply overseas countries with chilled meat. We can also assist with Indonesia's path to self sufficiency by supplying breeding cattle and technical advice. By providing this aid, we can also influence the implementation of animal welfare standards. The current ban has highlighted the negative impact live cattle import is having on local peasant cattlemen as they cannot compete

What About Animal Welfare in Foreign Countries

We cannot enforce our animal welfare standards on other countries. However we can advise, teach and encourage different cultures to better slaughter standards. Inviting overseas slaughtermen to work in Australian processing plants is one option where we can influence change.

Environmental Issues

Climate change is a huge issue when considering future policies. With predictions of extreme droughts and floods, fuel shortages, and the rapidly growing population, we must preserve our food sources and reduce environmental cost of producing it. Producing the finished product locally, inputs (fuel for long distant livestock trucks, huge ocean vessels, extended feedlots) will be minimal compared to current export industry.

Conclusion

Australia leads the world in Live Exports. However, it has been demonstrated repeatedly that Animal Welfare has been ignored and our world reputation has been seriously compromised. Exporters have made little progress in improving standards in Asia and the Middle East. Rebuilding processing plants in Australia will create jobs and business opportunities in many areas. Export of live animals for slaughter should be phased out by 2014. In the interim, cattle could be exported on a limited basis to approved abattoirs only. This will alleviate the current crises in the beef industry. Sheep and cattle exports to ME countries should be halted during Ramadan.

Lorraine Fox

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