

I was interested to see that the majority of submissions on this subject have been made by women. Studies have shown that women are able to empathise with human and animal victims more easily than men. I would hope however that all Australians who saw the Four Corners program were appalled by the footage shown. This cruelty has been going on for many years now and can occur in all the countries exported to, not just Indonesia.

I am doubtful that cruelty to animals can be avoided if they have to be trucked and/or shipped long distances. I believe that the kindest method would be to bring back local Australian slaughterhouses and kill as many animals locally as possible under controlled conditions. This might also increase local jobs and value-add to our meat exports.

As soon as you take an animal out of its known environment you cause stress. Add to that the unnatural life in a truck or on a ship with different food and housing conditions for weeks on end plus separation from other members of its herd – something we forget but that is crucial for social animals like sheep and cattle – then this is bound to cause cruelty. If you look at the number of animals that die in transit even if that is well within the “accepted” margin - less than 5% of sheep or 1% of cattle - that is a lot of animals when so many are being transported annually. And that is just the dead, there are many more that become ill or injured. I don't believe that live export can ever be humane.

A stockman who travelled on cattle ships looking after the animals spoke on Radio National's Bush Telegraph last month. He spoke of the deaths on ship – he claimed that it was usually **only** 0.4% on ships he was on when they are allowed 1%. That cold percentage hides the fact that there are a huge number of dead animals annually and many others that suffer severely on the voyage. Then when they get to the ports he talks about the inexperienced casual workers who are employed by the day, have no experience of cattle and are afraid of them. They come with sticks and logs and any other weapons they can find, wearing masks and gloves because they fear disease. Even when their rough treatment panics the cattle and causes cows to slip and break a leg, that does not matter as they are insured. Money considerations override ethics yet again. This stockman tries to show the local workers how to correctly handle the cattle but each day new workers come and so he cannot teach anything long-term. Does this sound like a recipe for adequate animal treatment in the near future? I don't believe that we can control conditions for these animals sufficiently once they reach the foreign countries to be sure that we have any impact on their welfare, be it how they are downloaded and trucked to feedlots, their treatment there or their final journey to and eventual slaughter in the abattoir (or in the case of many sheep whether whoever buys them to kill at home has any experience in humane killing).

If we have no control over these issues we should not be exporting animals. I read that 60% of Indonesians have a refrigerator but are just used to getting their meat fresh. This is no doubt true in the Middle East as well. As meat is eaten by the richer sections of society then I am sure that if we only send refrigerated meat that the culture will rapidly change. They may increase their intake from other countries but I don't believe there are sufficient animals elsewhere to do that rapidly. Indonesia has anyway committed to ending cattle imports by 2014, which is obviously unlikely to be achieved but shows the way they want to move.

The welfare of animals from other countries that may be brought in instead of our Australian animals if we stop live export is not a reason to continue our cruel trade. After all the MLA has not improved conditions for animals that much after supposedly 20 years of effort so our ability to improve animal welfare abroad is a pipedream. Most of Europe no longer exports live animals for meat and we can join New Zealand in changing our methods too. If the abolition of slavery had been held up by the argument that others would just take over and get the profits instead (and of course would treat the slaves much more cruelly too) we would still have slavery. Let us get out of this cruel trade as soon as possible. It has only built up over 20 years to the huge numbers exported today and it can be similarly reversed to return to local slaughtering and processing of meat in Australia for export. Maybe we don't stop all live meat export now but work towards a 2014 cut-off so that Australian abattoirs can be rebuilt.

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