

SUBMISSION

SENATE ENQUIRY: IMPROVEMENTS IN ANIMAL WELFARE FOR AUSTRALIAN LIVE EXPORTS

From Barbara Rendell

30th June 2011

3 pages

The overseas facilities and treatment, handling and slaughter of our exported livestock are proven as being beyond Australia's control. They have also proven to be substandard in every aspect. The cruelty and torture regularly documented by the RSPCA and Animals Australia over many years has never been addressed or improved in any way. This is not just a problem in Indonesia it is a major problem in the Middle Eastern markets where animals are treated with complete disdain and no animal welfare regulations are in place. It is extremely unlikely that there will ever be any animal welfare protection in these overseas markets and it would be impossible to police all animal welfare issues in countries where we have little or no access by independent inspectors. The industry bodies involved in this trade have continuously shown that they are totally unable to have any influence regarding the abuse of our animals over the past 30 years. Given this information it is impossible to have any faith that anything will change especially short term. I have no faith in industry appointed vets or anyone else that receive remuneration from the industry. In the case of vets this has been proven when the Veterinary governing body as a whole has come out against the continuation of live export, and colleagues directly involved in export continue to support it. I certainly prefer to accept the Veterinary's association in preference to those that are protecting an income.

The interpretation of Halal slaughter in these countries appears to rely greatly on the animals being slaughtered without pre stunning and also the tradition of animal sacrifice for certain festivals often see our animals fall into the hands of individual families and are treated appallingly from the method of transportation through to the method of slaughter by inexperienced lay people. By ignoring the pre stunning preference the animals are often subject to terror and pain. In the case of the cattle especially, given their size they are often treated in the most horrendous way due to the inability of the slaughterhouse worker to manage them. This has led to the disturbing and heart wrenching images that we have seen recently on the 4 corners programme.

The Mark 1 restraint boxes are well documented as being totally unsuitable. These boxes were supplied by MLA who knowing allowed and encouraged these barbaric restraints to be used. These boxes have received world wide condemnation for the totally unnecessary pain and fear that they cause the animals. In fact the world renowned expert in animal slaughter Mr Temple Grandin stated that these boxes "breached every humane standard anywhere in the world" and "was unacceptable and absolutely atrocious" if the MLA were prepared to let the export countries carry on using these restraints then they are clearly incompetent and should not be allowed to continue in their current capacity.

The transport of the livestock to overseas markets is also a dreadful debacle. We are constantly reading information from people who have worked on these boats that have left the industry due to animal welfare concerns. To this date nothing has been done to improve the conditions these animals endure during inappropriately long and arduous journeys over seas. The amount of animals that die during these voyages are completely unacceptable! The percentage, whilst sounding low at 1% actually equates to approximately 1000 deaths in the case of an average ship load of sheep for instance. This is a totally unacceptable number of deaths of animals that would otherwise remained healthy in the paddock. The ships are poorly ventilated, animals spend the voyage drenched in urine and faeces, which causes major health problems. Injured and dead animals are often thrown overboard, some as soon as they leave the port. This is verified by dead animals being washed up on WA beaches and Rottnest island. Sick or pregnant* animals do not have regular access to health treatment or checks because of the vast number of animals per ship and the inadequate number of health professionals available to them and limited access. * yes pregnant animals are often sent overseas despite the regulations, many abort enroute or have still born babies due to the stress. Those babies that do survive are often disposed of overboard because they are a burden or are trampled by other animals due to the cramped conditions. There would be numerous documented incidences of sheep giving birth on trucks etc despite rules that state pregnant sheep should not be transported.

I have personally witnessed the transport of sheep and cows to the port of Fremantle from the feedlots. Whilst this is a relatively short journey the method of transport using completely inadequate trucks almost always results in injuries to at least some of the animals on board every truck. I have personally witnessed a cow with a leg, obviously broken, outside the bars of the truck and sheep with two back legs over the top tier of an open truck. I could detail so many many more incidents like this of sheep down and trampled or gasping for air in disgustingly cramped conditions in 40 degree heat. The drivers of these trucks are generally abusive when you point out these problems and always nothing is ever done!

The Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock are outdated and totally inadequate to allow these acts of cruelty to continue unpoliced. We cannot rely on an unenforceable Code of Conduct for those involved in live export because it has proven time and time again that it is not worth the paper it is printed on.

To sum up the Live Export Industry have shown over the past 30 years that they have not been able to monitor or improve the level of cruelty and unacceptable treatment which has become the norm in this industry. The argument that we need to be involved in these countries with live animals in order to educate and improve conditions for all animals is ridiculous given the industry failure to have shown even a modicum of improvement Over the past 30 years. If anything conditions have got worse. The routine inhumane handling and slaughter will not improve unless we make a stand and put the welfare of our animals before profits. If Australia is prepared to stand up and be counted by saying we will not supply live animals to countries with no welfare standards we would achieve much more credibility and the countries involved would have to lift their standards or accept chilled meat only.

There is simply no room in 2011 for Australia to be involved in such a cruel and disgusting trade. It cannot be improved, we have the knowledge that we can never ensure the wellbeing and humane handling of our animals from the moment we leave our shores. We

must set a new standard and move to a chilled meat trade only thus ensuring that Australian animals are humanely slaughtered under Australian regulations and standards and jobs are created here for Australians. Quite simply and obviously the MLA cannot be trusted to ensure the welfare of our animals and have proven to be completely ineffective and incapable of raising animal welfare standards in other countries despite receiving millions of tax payers money to do so. In addition I would dearly like to see where this money has gone! It appears that the MLA are more content to spend multiple millions on industry spin and promotion than they are on improving conditions for animals. This is completely unacceptable!

I have not just come into this debate since the shocking footage came to light. I have been campaigning against the live export of animals for 20 years, and over this time I have gained a very good insight into the horror of live export. Please listen to our side of the story, the animals do not have a voice, we have to speak for them!

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission I hope you will note and respect my views.

Barbara Rendell

3 Pages