

Suppl. Sub



17 August 2011

Senator Bill Heffernan
Chairman – Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT

Dear Senator Heffernan,

As indicate at the hearing on 10 August we hereby provide a supplementary submission to the committee relevant to the current inquiry into 'Improvements in animal welfare for Australian live exports'. This supplementary information relates to information gathered from an investigation in Turkey, conducted just in the past few weeks. A video is included.

As the Committee may be aware, Turkey has just in the past year become a major importing destination for Australian cattle and sheep. Despite this, Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) has minimal (and inadequate) knowledge of livestock distribution networks and handling and slaughter practices in Turkey. This is clear from Appendix C of the MLA/LiveCorp submission to the Independent Inquiry being concurrently conducted by Bill Farmer AO (see pages 105/106 relevant to Turkey in that submission, available from <http://www.livestockexportreview.gov.au/submissions-received> no.457). MLA/Livecorp's submission indicates they do not know how many feedlots, markets and abattoirs handle our animals, and thus acknowledge they have not assessed facilities and practices to ensure they comply with OIE guidelines, nor therefore have they effected any improvements. The table indicates also that they are however aware of potential 'risk areas' related to restraint methods at slaughter and traditional slaughter practices in Turkey.

Therefore, the current government assessment of Australia's regulatory frameworks relating to the treatment of animals in importing countries, Animals Australia undertook in the past three weeks to conduct an initial assessment in Turkey to ensure that the government were provided with information relating to routine handling and slaughter practices in this country.

We provided this information, including the video footage, to Minister Ludwig and have also provided it to Mr Farmer when we met with him earlier this week.

Over a period of seven days in Turkey, Animals Australia investigators visited 10 slaughterhouses in the cities and towns of Adana, Mersin, Bandirma, Gonen and Istanbul. Conversations with staff at all these facilities and footage obtained at four slaughterhouses reveals that the standard method of restraining cattle for slaughter in Turkey is through shackling a rear leg and hoisting the conscious animal for the throat cut.

Similarly – the routine method for slaughtering sheep in Turkey is to shackle and hoist them prior to the throat cut. In the major government abattoir in Istanbul a 'V restraint' device for sheep was observed in operation. However, at the point of slaughter in this abattoir, sheep were being manhandled from the 'V restraint' for the throat cut – which was extremely poor on a number of occasions, as footage will show. It is therefore very likely that conscious animals were being hoisted onto the production line at this facility.

Evidence documented by Animals Australia' investigators in Turkey shows clear breaches of OIE guidelines. OIE guidelines relevant to the slaughter of animals require that the 'Methods of restraint causing avoidable suffering should not be used in conscious animals because they cause severe pain and stress' and of direct relevance to standard restraint methods in Turkey - 'suspending or hoisting animals (other than poultry) by the feet or legs' and 'the mechanical clamping of the legs or feet of the animals ... as the sole method of restraint;' should not be used (section 7.5.2.4 (b 1 and 2)).

We also note that section 1.8 of the Australian government's new performance measures for Indonesia states that 'live livestock are not be lifted by their horns, legs or tails...' Animals Australia was not able to confirm the origin of animals in the footage obtained – although the veterinarian at the Cimet abattoir in Bursa (audible on tape) stated that the sheep being shackled and slaughtered were Australian. There did appear to be the carcasses of Australian sheep at this facility. The cattle being hoisted and slaughtered in Bursa's Kayarlar Ozel Et Kombinasi were identified to investigators as imported, but from the distance of the observational platform it was not possible to ascertain their country of origin. There were hundreds of Australian sheep in holding pens at the main Istanbul abattoir. It was determined that in six of the ten facilities visited that Australian animals were supplied and slaughtered there.

The distribution network for Australian animals in Turkey appears to be broad – with both cattle and sheep going to small and large enterprises for fattening or selling – whilst also being supplied to minor and major abattoirs. It was not possible in the time frame available to this investigation to determine the full extent of this network.

What is clear from this preliminary investigation is that whilst slaughterhouses in Turkey are more automated and hygienic than in some other importing countries – severe welfare issues caused by inhumane methods of restraint, methods that breach OIE guidelines, severely impact on the welfare of animals and would be completely unacceptable to the Australian community. This further evidence from Turkey also reveals that all methods of slaughter without stunning are inhumane.

The significant welfare issues revealed by this investigation to Turkey again demonstrates that the Australian live export industry do not put animal welfare ahead of trade considerations. The Australian live export industry has clearly sought new markets and commenced and continued the supply of our animals to importing countries which do not have facilities or skills to ensure they will be treated in accordance with even the minimal OIE guidelines. Our own investigations over the past eight years to nine countries have documented the suffering and cruelty caused by these deficiencies, and it is evident that the live export industry are well aware of the inadequate and unacceptable treatment of Australian animals in these countries.

As further evidence of this we note with alarm the similar lack of knowledge of the supply chain in many other current (and in some cases long-standing) importing countries which are set out in the MLA/LiveCorp submission to the Farmer review (link above), and the acknowledged deficiencies in compliance therefore with the OIE guidelines. Of the 17 importing countries recently assessed, in at least ten they have minimal information on the supply chain, in nine they acknowledge 'inappropriate' slaughter practices, and they acknowledge existing OIE risk areas in every country.

This MLA/LiveCorp information and our recent investigation to Turkey further strengthens our absolute opposition to live animal export as it is abundantly clear that the welfare of Australian animals is not being, and cannot be, protected in importing countries.

Yours sincerely,



Glenys Oogjes
Executive Director