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## SUBMISSION

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

In providing this supplementary submission I refer to my previous submission but add the following observations based on my extensive helicopter mustering experience of both feral and controlled animals of various species across vast areas of unfenced unalienated land and also uncontrolled pastoral leases and other tenures.

My opinion is set out below:-

Prior to expressing that opinion I wish to state that I overlooked many considerations in my initial submission, in my own mind due to the fact that I was unable to see past the devastation that I could see being wrought not only upon our personal finances and security but to that of the whole Industry. I apologize for that oversight.

Recent Events at the Charles Darwin Universities' Mataranka station campus revolving around lack of animal nutrition and other stimuli have jolted me to revisit my experiences of the past and I feel quite sure that having witnessed events as laid out as below that I would be derelict in duty should I not bring them to be scrutineered.

**Preamble:**

**My previous submission included financial statements illustrating our serious predicament should the Live Export trade be ceased or seriously lessened.**

**I believe that the senate committee would have received numerous submissions relaying the personal financial and emotional devastation of producers and downstream industry members.**

**Also there should have been numerous submissions relaying the devastation to rangelands which will ensue should the trade lessening continue and thus force overstocking of previously well regulated pasture growth.**

**Perhaps there has also been reference to the effects of serious malnutrition of all species of animals that cohabitate on all of the referred to lands. That is the bovines, and other greater animals as well as many types of native animals which live in harmony across the pastoral estate with those greater animals.**

**There would be six main areas of concern and risk for the mainstream Live Export producer.**

- 1. Personal financial stress**
- 2. Personal emotional stress**
- 3. Rangeland overstocking and degradation**
- 4. Animal overstocking and resultant malnutrition on competed for pasture growth**
- 5. Breakdown of the composition of animal herd structure and the devastating animal welfare that will ensue.**
- 6. Other risks; - Sovereign and Disease.**

I wish to illustrate the last three points only and seek to appear to answer questions on these subjects.

I humbly ask for senior experienced animal industry representatives, both from within the NT Department of Animal Industries and from Industry, to attend to help illustrate these points.

#### **Point 4; Overstocking and Malnutrition.**

The recent public discussions regarding serious malnutrition of cattle at the Charles Darwin University Mataranka Campus is a small demonstration of how quickly animal condition can deteriorate to the point of starvation and death of these animals when they are starved of nutritional feed.

A normal cow needs to consumes 2.5% of its body weight per day of dry matter, as well as up to 45 litres of water for a large animal of around 450 KG live weight. The dry matter should be a balanced diet of the essential elements, minerals, proteins and energy to feed the digestive processes of the ruminant animal.

In all parts of Northern Australia which supports the live Export trade there is a dry and wet season each year. The dry season may extend up to 280 days but is usually in the order of from 180 to 210 days each year. This means that the standing hay reduces in protein and energy content as it dries out and the plants for their own survival retract its nutrients into its root systems awaiting more moisture from the next "wet" season to recycle the growth pattern.

During the wet there is abundant good feed, giving forth to a rising plane of nutrition when the cows usually cycle, if they entered this phase in enough body condition, ideally at least a body condition score of from three to four. Cows also require a very high plane of nutrition to lactate to their young which for our Brahman cattle is around five litres per day at a consumption rate of around five thousand joules per litre. A very high energy demand, of course this is when ideally cows will cycle and re-conceive for the next season's calf, which is a further energy requirement.

As the dry develops each year the protein deficiency increases over all areas of the north so cattle require a very high regime of supplementary (high protein) feeding to enable then to just maintain their body weight. This protein comes in the form of nitrogen in urea and feeds such as copra meal or cotton seed meal.

Should the producers income be curtailed then this supplement will be most likely be not bought which means that the high stocking rates needed to form the scale of economy required to drive an entity's successful budget will therefore over pressure the pasture and serious malnutrition will set in unless the cattle numbers can be lightened off by selling or culling (shooting).

Cattle can survive on what is known as the Unimproved stocking rate which in the Sturt Plateaux Area which will be without supplementation at around two head per square Kilometre, but such is the demand for a higher economic scale of production to justify high capital costs that the usual stocking Improved rate may be four to six times that number. I.E. up to twelve head per square Kilometre.

The energy component required on a daily basis is just one of the calculations required for cattle management and is quite simple. It is just a matter of calculating in Joules a product of how far in metres a cow of certain mass must walk to consume the required amount of grass that contains sufficient energy for that journey and to conduct the process of digestion, lactation or weight gain. Nearly always during the late dry there is a large deficit in the equation. This is usual even at the unimproved stocking rate.

Therefore even at the Unimproved stocking rate cattle will deteriorate in condition and suffer a lower pregnancy and calf weaning rate than when attended to with large amounts of supplementation.

At the Unimproved stocking rate animals will be able to selectively graze the preferred species which is only a very small percentage of the usual biomass production from each wet season. The low average quality of that biomass is what drives the high input cost of supplementation and allows for more animals to utilise the large amount of biomass and for their production and accommodation to be spread over the high capital costs of infrastructure. That is a one hundred sq K paddock with say forty Kilometres of fence can carry say 1200 head instead of just 200 head.

There is a further need for supplementation in these production areas and it is in the form of Phosphorous (P) during the wet season, when the cattle are laying down condition because the pastures of the whole of Northern Australia are P deficient.

The cows often deplete their skeletal structure of P during a long dry as even if P is fed then they cannot take it up (it can only remineralise the skeletal system when fed in combination with green feed) and it often is counterproductive to the general metabolism of the cattle trying to survive on dry feed. P supplementation is about twice as expensive as Protein supplement.

On the Sturt Plateau a usual figure of around \$25 to \$30 per adult head per year is spent on supplementation inside a yearly budgeted figure of around \$100 per head per year. In that yearly budget is allowance for around \$10 per head of capital improvement as most herds in these regions are either expanding or improving the genotypes with high capital cost of better bulls being required. Stopping that capital cost is not an option when the normal turnoff per year is not turned off and more room is required to feed those animals. That can be done on the home station only if there is room to expand or they must be trucked away to somewhere else and costly agistment be paid for.

From this discussion one can easily see that if the herd financial income level is at all meted down from that which has been built up and worked for over many years of hard work then there will indeed be no money for supplementation and further improvements or agistment to house the

extra unsold stock.

**Therefore widespread starvation and malnutrition of tens if not hundreds of thousands of animals will ensue.**

**Is that the animal welfare issue that the animals Australia and RSPCA has thought about and that they will have by their persistence in forcing a cessation of trade in Live export force upon these cattle?**

**I say to the senate committee that neither the animal welfare groups nor the government members did think about any of these consequential actions prior to enforcing the ban.**

**Needless to say the points one two and three listed above will be extremely exacerbated as time progresses and a quick remedy to resolve herd entity finances or overstocking is not put in place.**

I must assume here that the senate committee is well versed in the many reasons why these northern produced cattle with their lowering plane of nutrition each year cannot possibly compete on the Australian domestic market where weight for age is a high performance specification at the cattle grid. That is even if it were economic to produce in the north or compete with the freight differential of Southern producers being positioned so close comparatively to their market outlets.

**Point 5. Degradation of herd structure and ensuing devastating welfare consequence.**

**This is an issue that has most troubled me and I am sure is the least experienced and therefore given lip service to by many of our industry.**

**First a preamble describing previous herd controls.**

By virtue of my widespread flying background I have been able to see these events happening from herd overstocking prior to the major destocking exercises that the BTEC campaign brought to bear on the Industry. I remind members of the committee that BTEC cost in the orders of \$960 million (1992 dollars) and took a core time line of thirteen years intensity to complete apart from the preparations and completions either side of those thirteen years of some years each.

The program eradicated by shooting in excess of several hundred thousand each, of buffalo and bovines.

Over that thirteen year period to 1992 I flew an average of just over 1100 charge hours each year and for the last three years of it Heli-Muster Pty Ltd was flying 23,000 hours annually with 23 pilots most of whom were flying over their legal limit of nine hundred hours per year. Operations at the end of the year for a period of two to three months involved up to five separate camps of from three to five helicopters each with supporting stock inspectors and ammunition, shooting clean to waste and covering all areas of monitored positive TB unfenced rangelands of the NT, WA and North Qld. Apart from that core of 23 machines there was nearly the same number again of other companies in the same activity.

On one job at Wagait, an area of only some three hundred square miles we shot to waste 15,500 animals, nearly all buffalo in a period of just four and one half days. I was the lead pilot and we employed four machines with four pilots and many stock inspectors.

The first NT donkey eradication program (in the early eighties) averaged a rate of 140 hours per hour for the five years and 2200 hours of its duration.

The organisation and experience levels to achieve such controls were immense and profound, virtually none of which exists today, and indeed I am the only pilot that I know of who flew right through BTEC and still in practice today.

Most wild cattle herd mustering operations involved a herd composition of from 40% to 50% of clean skin bulls. Bulls are what we describe as animals in excess of four years old mature age animals.

### **The situation**

The normal herd composition of a productive herd is from 2 to 5 % of bulls, 50% of breeders and young joiner cows, 19 to 30% of sale animals per year depending on whether the herd is still building up in numbers or is at a static level and the balance are other young and replacement stock.

Usually nearly two thirds of the sale stock is male animals. This means that when a herd is abandoned that those male stock are allowed to grow into mature age working bulls. Overstocking occurs quickly and nutrition pressures usually force a herd to disperse if possible; that is if they are able to penetrate the surrounding boundaries.

It is clearly obvious that very quickly there will be a large majority of dominant strong entire males competing for pastures. Although it is easy to imagine the devastation wrought upon pasture and animal health alike it is by far not the worst dilemma I wish to raise.

Bovines by their nature do not enjoy herd or mob structure of discipline such as are evident in wild horse mobs where a lead mare is the boss number one and she controls the herd composition and most importantly controls the selection and intrusion of young males. The lead mare will evict all males except for the chosen stallion and thus it is one happy family.

This is not the case in bovines, where survival of the fittest prevails and there is no hierarchy as such. This means that when a young heifer comes on heat that she will receive that attention of all competing males to serve her. A mob of sharks in a feeding frenzy would be a good comparison.

This sounds rather bland, but I want to jolt members, of the committee, no I don't, I WANT TO SEVERELY JERK THEM INTO A REALISATION OF THIS DIRE CONSEQUENCE, and relay to them the revulsion that is felt by any who witness these events when a large mob of strong males, in essence rape the heifer whilst ever she is cycling. Usually death is the result of such attentions. It is not a pretty sight.

That is why the composition of wild mobs before they overstock, starve and start depleting is usually from 40 to 50% bulls, a small number of calves, a small number of juvenile males, a small number of producing cows, and a small number of barren cows. These barren cows are always evident and constitute a fair % of adult cows and they are those that have been rendered infertile by the gruesome riding process but somehow manage to survive.

As herds disperse, especially on the less productive lands, there will be found small populations of family groups up to 20 or 30 in number which will be just cows and some calves that roam at random and of course still attract the attention of roaming wild bulls whenever they cycle. The scent that a cycling cow emits when coming on heat can be smelt for some miles by a bull, so they

are unable to escape.

**The welfare situation that will prevail is the mass rape to death of thousands of young heifers when first they cycle. Those that do escape are either barren or lucky but they will suffer at the next oestrus and every time there-after until they either become barren, learn to endure the process or die.**

**Therefore widespread torture and death to tens if not hundreds of thousands of animals will ensue.**

**Is that the animal welfare issue that the animals Australia and RSPCA has thought about and that they will have by their persistence in forcing a cessation of trade in Live export force upon these cattle?**

**I say again to the senate committee that neither the animal welfare groups nor the government members did think about any of these consequential actions prior to enforcing the ban.**

**COMPARED TO THAT TEN MINUTES TELEVISION FOOTAGE (ALLEGED TO BE AT LEAST PARTLY FABRICATED) GARNISHEERED FROM A FOREIGN SOVEREIGN COUNTRY IS PIFFLING IN THE EXTREME.**

**Why did the elected representatives of our country not try to gather this sort of welfare information prior to the momentous event of the live ex ban?**

#### **Point 6. Greatest other risks concerning animal welfare**

##### **Sovereign risk**

The greatest risk that this trade has was demonstrated by the action of the ban on Live export. It was imposed I believe by the actions of a minority group with an agenda to simply destroy the trade not to contribute to and help the trade. The ban has put at risk the viability of an immense area of Australia's landmass productive sector its dependent communities and an extremely important part of our country's GDP.

It is simply not acceptable to the normal voter of this country to think that such large risk factors can be exercised by such a small group of non elected radical people.

##### **Disease risk**

This ban has also exposed another vital risk, that of bringing much closer to our shores the risk of Foot and Mouth disease by virtue of the fact that to simply feed itself the Indonesian people may need to overturn their Animal Health Policy on Foot and Mouth and import cattle or meat from such affected countries.

The cattle station community will not be vigilant in observing for these incursions of disease as they who are left will have their ability to move around severely financially curtailed and their will badly sapped.

Uncontrolled herds tending to feral by nature will impose a major risk to our disease status as disease will have the potential to spread unchecked for long periods of time. It must also be remembered that the piloting skills of yesteryear to fly and shoot and control these herds is now a

largely forgotten art. It cannot be sourced from the Military; in fact military pilots have been found to be largely inept at low level manoeuvring and safety and mustering usefulness.

**-Key suggestion to improve all risk.**

- 1. Immediately allow the resumption of export trade.**
- 2. Provide for a suitable time; say twelve months to negotiate with the Indonesian Government, animal welfare protocols that are desirable but acceptable to both parties.**
- 3. Allow a further time frame of at least two years to install all instrumentalities to suit those agreed to protocols.**

**Failing that;- Immediately set up a compensation package that will ensure that no producer is worse off because of the Live export ban, retrospectively at the point of usual sale time and place.**

Briefly this involved a valuation by a group of senior livestock agents, supervised by Department staff as if they were not infected by any disease and then the mob would be auctioned and removed from the station. An adjudicator was appointed should one be needed to negotiate with the owner of the cattle to settle the value. When I say retrospectively I mean that values should be estimated for all cattle at their known weights with the prevailing prices when the ban was put in place as they came on market. (ready to go)

**That will then ensure that all downstream dependant Industries and communities may continue as usual without the need for special compensation or pastoral care. (As per the usual emergency Animal Disease Preparedness Guidelines and as was done under the BTEC administration to rid the herds of the final diseased herds)**

- 4. Either bind a memorandum of understating between the Federal, State and Territory governments and Industry to curtail an allowance for minority groups to interfere with sovereign GDP and any Industry essential to that sovereign GDP, or**
- 5. Amend the Australian Constitution to make unlawful, otherwise enforce it if it is so constructed, the act of forcing an industry which is conducting itself lawfully within Australia to be hindered in such a manner that its security is jeopardised.**
- 6. Penalties should extend without protection to those who conspire to or otherwise contribute to, such acts including ministers of the crown.**
- 7. Consider the instigation of criminal animal welfare actions against those who have overlooked the extreme consequential actions of the embargo that they enforced or caused should they arise.**

I am devastated that politicians are able to arrive at such decision so quickly without the responsibility of resourcing for themselves consequential actions or at least having informed debate about them. These are the politicians who are elected to conduct the due process of informed debate under our Westminster system.

This live export ban has the potential to impart widespread financial, emotional, rangelands and animal welfare ruin, none of which it appears was thought about on the back of ten minutes of Television footage from another sovereign country, some at least of which appears false.

In the above statements where I have detailed previous shooting / culling activities I have referred to a highly organised, well funded program supported by pilots and stock Inspectors of exemplary skill level. Those people by and large are not available today.

In this event should producers be so overwrought that they have to vacate their lands that such welfare issues will emerge in an undisclosed state for perhaps quite some time prior to it being made aware of to authorities or someone being able to do anything about it.

I wish to sincerely thank the chance to present my ideas.