



16.10.2011

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

I am a veterinarian with over 35 years experience in the cattle industry. I viewed the Four Corners programme showing substandard slaughter facilities and methods in Indonesia. It also showed terrible animal handling procedures and cruelty. I understand that there is argument as to whether a Droughtmaster steer filmed in the sequence was shaking because of a fear of the immediate environment or if this was possible case of transit tetany.

From my experience, transit tetany is less common in steers than pregnant cattle but will occur. The condition usually manifests after a long and stressful transport.

I believe the signs displayed by "steer 3" are consistent with transit tetany. It is impossible from the viewing of a video clip to be certain as to why the animal was shaking but transit tetany is one of the conditions that could explain this.

I note other explanations have been put forward such as :

- "I have little doubt, however, that fear was a large contributor to the trembling"
- "I have therefore concluded on the evidence that the twitching signs represent an idiopathic short term neurological condition"
- "the study animal exhibited many subjective signs of stress consistent with prolonged exposure to the inappropriate strong and repeated stimuli of other animals being killed or dismembered in close proximity"

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I cannot with any certainty refute any of the above explanations and stress is also a major factor in causing transit tetany. However, by the same logic I don't believe anyone who has seen some footage on TV can conclusively state that fear of the surroundings was the cause of trembling and rule out transit tetany or other metabolic based problems brought on by a long and stressful journey to the abattoir.

Sincerely,

David Morrell.