

# **SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ENQUIRY INTO LIVE ANIMAL EXPORTS**

(Original Submission Number 427)

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## **Conflicts of interest within the live animal export industry**

**Our concern is the real death count on export ships may never be known due to inaccurate record keeping and disturbingly the falsifying of official animal death records.**

This allegation is supported by LLOYD Reeve-Johnson, a veterinary surgeon accredited with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, alleging government officials charged with overseeing the live export industry have repeatedly failed to address conflicts of interest within the system.

Dr Reeve-Johnson said he had witnessed first-hand the inner workings of the "fundamentally flawed" live export industry where livestock companies were allowed to be self-policing.

He had a blunt warning for Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig: ensure exporters cannot directly employ or pay the officials who should be providing independent advice on animal welfare standards -- whether in foreign abattoirs or on the ships that take the animals there.

In 2008, Dr Reeve-Johnson was one of several vets trained by AQIS to verify animal welfare standards on export ships in the wake of the death of more than 5600 sheep on the Cormo Express in 2003. It was carrying 50,000 sheep.

On his second journey on a livestock ship, Dr Reeve-Johnson kept daily records of the conditions of the animals. When more than 2 per cent of the goats on board died, he followed AQIS protocol and notified the commonwealth quarantine body immediately.

Dr Reeve-Johnson has alleged that when he compiled his "end of journey" report for AQIS, the livestock company instructed him not to record any of the additional goats that died as they were being unloaded from the ship. It is a claim denied by the company.

Dr Reeve-Johnson alleges he refused to alter his report and sent it to AQIS with his tally of 18 goat mortalities. He said he was disturbed to discover the exporter had also sent a copy of his report -- on his letterhead -- declaring only 11 goats had died.

A spokesman for the exporter last night maintained the company had provided AQIS with accurate numbers and Dr Reeve-Johnson had miscalculated the mortalities.

An AQIS spokesman said an investigation was conducted into Dr Reeve-Johnson's allegations, but "on the evidence obtained, the matter was closed".

Speaking to The Australian, Dr Reeve-Johnson said that while ever exporters employed independent auditors or vets charged with verifying animal welfare standards, the industry remained at risk of a conflict of interest.

"There is a fundamental problem in the way the industry is run," he said. "It's been given the trust of being self-policing and with that comes responsibility which I don't think is being taken."

While continuing to work as a private consultant, Dr Reeve-Johnson has spent three years trying to raise the issue in AQIS, and the Agriculture Department.

He even wrote to former agriculture minister Tony Burke, warning him: "The transparency of a government-legislated system and its integrity are undermined by the lack of independence and potential for a repetitive conflict of interest."

Animal rights law expert Malcolm Caulfield said the model for the resumption of the live cattle trade to Indonesia, announced last week by Senator Ludwig, was problematic because the exporters would select and pay auditors, just they are able to select and pay AQIS vets.

A spokesman for Senator Ludwig last night defended the rigour of the audit processes and said it would be "totally inappropriate" if taxpayers, rather than exporters, had to pay auditors to verify standards in foreign abattoirs.

"It is very important to understand that the audit and verification process will not be conducted by the industry or its employees," he said

Source: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/vet-worried-about-dodgy-inspections-of-live-exports/story-fn59niix-1226093400993>

We understand the bar coding of each animal should provide a more accurate count of the livestock loaded and unloaded from export ships, through scanning. The question still remains who has access to this data and how secure is it at all points of analysis. To date the live export industry has been self-regulating leading to monumental conflicts of interest including the inaccurate reporting of deaths, a major animal welfare issue. What is not accurately measured can not be adequately controlled.

I hope the Senate Standing Committee will take my concerns into consideration in their deliberations.

Christine Lawton

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