

# NANDEWAR ANIMAL HEALTH SERVICES



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Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport  
P.O. Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA act 2600

Dear Senators,

I have been asked to comment on a segment of the film footage shown by the ABC 4-Corners programme on Indonesian Live Exports, and specifically the footage of the trembling animal which it is alleged on the programme by the presenter and by Temple Grandin (a designated expert) as being signs exhibited in response to extreme fear sustained while witnessing the slaughter of other cattle in the surrounding space.

I offer this opinion as a veterinarian involved in beef cattle practice for over 30 years in northern NSW, a beef producer and a past-president of the Australian Cattle Veterinarians. Based only on my viewings of the footage available to the public on the programme and referring to the particular segment of which the animal images is approximately 40 seconds duration, I offer the following comments.

I have witnessed many animals showing varying signs of stress in response to handling, restraint, mustering or animal husbandry and veterinary procedures. Cattle have differing genetically generated temperaments yielding varying behavioural responses to a multitude of human interactivity, and such behaviours are further modified by more frequent handling and education. I have not observed any healthy beef animal confronted by a stressful situation, exhibit signs consistent with the footage displayed i.e. standing completely still while trembling with muscle fasciculation. The nearest to trembling I have witnessed in a stressed beef animal could be described as agitation and restlessness i.e. moving irrationally in an attempt to escape its restraint or perceived entrapment, but not constantly standing in one place with no foot movements. The signs exhibited could be caused by a variety of factors, including toxins and metabolic disturbances such as transit tetany, a condition so named to describe the appearance (tetany) and the association with transport stresses when such conditions can on occasions be precipitated. The signs of transit tetany are related to the effect on muscle activity by a fall in plasma concentrations of magnesium, which in severe cases causes death by heart muscle failure. Another small observation of the 40 second footage, is that the animal in question appears not to be trembling at the beginning of the segment when there are four animals in the race. I do not know the duration between the film segments being taken, but it is suggestive of the condition being developed during this period.

It is important to state that a sound clinical diagnosis without an opportunity to know the history of the transport of these animals, to examine the affected animal and even to take laboratory specimens to confirm a diagnosis is at best speculative. Accordingly I found the willingness of the presenter and the expert to arrive at a convincing diagnosis of fear-induced trembling to be fanciful, especially given that such signs are not consistent with the proffered causation. However, regardless of cause of the signs displayed, I hasten to add that the slaughtering of cattle in full view of cohorts could not be considered reasonable practice.

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