

9th August 2011

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to you to strongly urge you to support the Bill to Ban Live Export. Australian's are appalled and shocked by the way the welfare of animals has been mishandled in live trade, and presently many Australians are organising rallies across the country to show their support for the end to this inhumane trade, their distrust in the way the live trade industry is conducted by the Meat Industry and Government and the need for this live industry to be replaced by a chilled meat trade.

Compelling evidence has mounted up against the Live Trade Industry, revealing the serious welfare problems face by Australian animals in the arduous and lengthy sea journey's and then during the onward transportation and slaughter in the destination country. The recent investigation into cattle slaughter in Indonesia, as aired on the ABC, has undoubtedly shocked and increase awareness of this ethically unacceptable industry.

The Facts:

- Over the last 30 years 150 million sheep have been exported.
- The arduous sea journeys can take up to 3 weeks. Overcrowding, poor ventilation, failure to graze, disease and injury contribute a high mortality rate. In 2010 30, 000 sheep died en route to the Middle East, and 10, 000 cattle died on ships.
- Animals who survive the trip commonly suffer from injury, disease such as eye infections leading blindness, thirst, hunger, extreme heat and exhaustion. Losses of cattle at sea have been also due to cyclones and heavy seas, the worst incident totalling 301, another 68 cattle.
- The majority of countries importing Australian Animals have no laws protecting animals from cruelty.
- Sheep exported to the Middle East are routinely mishandled, dragged, leg bound with wire, thrown into car boots, in a region that is often near 50 degrees Celsius in summer.
- Cattle exported to Indonesia are brutally treated prior to slaughter, including tripping, eye gouging, being whipped and kicked, having their tails broken, leg tendon slashing. Similar abuse in the Middle East has been documented.
- The vast Majority of animals exported to the Middle Eastern and South East Asian countries are slaughtered whilst fully conscious. Animal's Australia's investigation into Indonesia showed on average it took 11 cuts to the throat, whilst the animal remained conscious, thrashing in pain. Without pre-cut stunning, behavioural and brain response in a cattle can last up to 2 minutes for cattle, during which time the animal experiences severe pain, and elicits fear and panic, while inhaling blood into its trachea. Such a massive injury would result in significant suffering and distress in a period before insensibility supervenes.

The Industry:

- The live Industry has proven that they do not care for the welfare of animals, treated only as chattels to be traded for profit. Every year millions of animals suffer in live trade, while the industry continues to introduce ineffective and damaging 'welfare improvements', only proving they cannot be trusted with the Australian public. In 2005 LiveCorp, in conjunction with the MLA, looked into funding research slaughter practices in Indonesia, only to turn the project down. The Industry was not prepared to allow findings to be independently published by the researcher. The Industry opts to edit research submissions, thereby controlling research and modifying public expectations and perceptions. The fact that the MLA and LiveCorp were interested in commencing research suggests they were well aware of conditions faced by animals in Indonesia long before these were exposed in the Four Corners report. The Industry has proven that it cannot be trusted to be honest with the Australian public. (<http://theconversation.edu.au/animal-exports-how-the-industry-controls-research-to-shut-down-debate-1750>).
- Local people throughout the Middle East and South East Asia believe that after 30 years their treatment of animals is acceptable as Australia continues to export to them. The continued supply only reinforces that cruel treatment and poor welfare standard is acceptable. The only way to encourage importing countries to improve welfare of animals is to call for an immediate ban live export and convey the message we will not support animal cruelty.
- Following the ban on live sheep to Egypt in 2006 and revelations of cruelty in live trade, Egypt rather than replace its trade with other countries, has increased chilled meat trade with Australia. It makes logical sense not to send animals thousands of kilometres offshore at the expense of Australian jobs. By reopening abattoirs, building the already lucrative chilled meat trade and creating new jobs (45,000 meat workers have lost jobs since the start of live trade) an alternative outcome to the situation can be developed. New Zealand has shown the way by banning live exports in 2006, and has made substantial improvements in productivity and product development in sheep processing, increasing the volume of processed sheep meat over the last 10 years from 25% to 80%. This coincides with improve productivity and efficiency and furthering investment opportunities and innovation processing technology.

I implore you to consider passing the Bill to End Live Export. The Gillard Government may say they did not know of these horrors but they cannot say they do not know now. It is unforgivable and ethically unacceptable to knowingly condone Australian animals being sent to this fate that are inconsistent with World Organisation of Animal Health standards.

Sandy Presland