

SUBMISSION

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Committee Inquiry

Improvements in animal welfare for Australian live exports

Submitted by
(Ms) Terrie Templeton ,

14/7/11

Terms of Reference **Item 1.**

Government

According to the DFAT website, The Australian Government is responsible for quarantine, international animal health matters and the import and export of animals and animal products. It is also responsible for safeguarding the welfare of:

- animals involved in the live animal export trade and animals processed at export-registered slaughter establishments http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/animal_welfare.html

Clearly, successive Australian governments have failed in their duty of care to exported animals.

Ignorance is no excuse.

From its very beginnings over two decades ago, governments and industry bodies have known about the animal welfare implications of exporting live animals to countries which have no animal welfare protections.

In 1985, the Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare condemned the live export of sheep on animal welfare grounds, but anticipated that economic and other factors would demand its continuation. The SSCAW concluded that ‘if a decision were made on the future of the trade purely on animal welfare grounds, there is enough evidence to stop the trade.’

The SSCAW recommended that the Federal Government *promote and encourage the expansion of the refrigerated meat trade to the Middle east and other countries, with the aim of eventually substituting it for the live sheep trade.*

Twenty six years later and nothing has changed except that the number of exported animals has increased, and a number of countries completely lacking animal welfare protections has been added to the trade.

It seems to be quite clear that successive governments have turned a blind eye to animal welfare issues in their greed for the export dollar.

Recommendation: The Australian must now begin to take their responsibility in this area seriously.

The assurances by the Minister of Agriculture and the procedures he has put in place are not enough to satisfy me that animal welfare will be protected in the future.

- Pre-stunning must be mandatory in all export markets. OIE guidelines are not good enough.
- Audits of abattoirs must be carried out by truly independent people, not by industry representatives. (Talk about putting the fox among the chickens!) I would suggest representatives from animal welfare groups or government employees.
- Random audits must be permitted
- Results of all audits must be made available to the public
- The tracking procedures and auditing processes must extend to all countries to which Australia exports animals, not just Indonesia

MLA and LiveCorp

MLA and LiveCorp have similarly chosen to ignore animal welfare issues in the live export industry in their pursuit of profit.

Both organisations have abjectly failed to regulate the industry and ensure the welfare of Australian animals despite receiving evidence on numerous occasions of animal cruelty over many years. Those industry bodies are yet to accept responsibility for the events of the last month.

MLA and LiveCorp claim that improvements have been made, but there is precious little evidence of that.

The 'restraint box' introduced by MLA to Indonesia probably gives a pretty clear picture of their level of interest in animal welfare. It has been condemned by animal welfare experts and cattle experts around the world and should be banned immediately.

I note media reports which state that in the past month, since the ban on live exports, a significant number of Indonesian abattoirs have been upgraded. If it is that easy, why has the MLA failed to do this before now?

Recommendation

- Since MLA and LiveCorp have so clearly failed in their duty of care, the whole board should be sacked and replaced with people who have not only industry expertise, but also a demonstrated interest in animal welfare. The new board should have at least one member from an independent body such as an animal welfare group or an independent vet.

- The financial affairs of the MLA should be closely examined to find out exactly where the money goes. Particular attention should be paid to the money allocated for research. If the new MLA is to be allowed to continue to conduct research, it must be mandatory for that research to be available to the public.
- Restraint boxes must be banned immediately.

Other Industry Bodies

On the 7th July, 2011. the Cattle Council president Greg Brown said that everyone involved in the live export trade should accept some responsibility for the situation which led to the suspension of live exports to Indonesia.

Having followed this matter closely for the past month or so, I have come to the conclusion that industry bodies also have been content to turn a blind eye to what happens to the animals they raise once they leave our shores. Sheep farmers have known for decades what happens to their sheep, yet they continue to send them. It defies belief that cattle farmers do not know what happens to their cattle. After all, if you know your cattle are to be slaughtered without stunning.....

And yet cattle producers were out there screaming for an immediate resumption of the trade. No mention of safeguards.

I wish, therefore, to place on record my complete disillusion with the whole of the export livestock industry.

Item 2.

- Processing animals in Australia provides more economic value than exporting them live
- The Australian meat processing industry is being crippled by competition with the live export industry. In the past 30 years, 40 000 jobs have been lost and 150 meat processing plants have shut down. Last year 1000 meat processing workers lost their jobs, and many plants are operating at well below capacity.
- It is jobs in rural and regional areas which are lost. Meat processing was, in years gone by, the second largest rural employer after mining
- Australian consumers are paying higher prices for meat because of the competition with live exports.
- There is clear and indisputable evidence that Middle East countries accept chilled meat products from Australia. In 2009 sheep meat exports exceeded live sheep exports both in dollar terms and live sheep equivalent.
- If there are countries with inadequate refrigeration, then the \$5 levy per head might go providing refrigeration.

Item 3.

Other mattersThe most certain way to ensure animal welfare is to ban the export of live animals and to replace that trade with the export of chilled and frozen meat.

The Minister has invoked the OIE guidelines in his efforts to lift the ban. These are guidelines to which Australia is a signatory and which Australia helped to draw up. They are intended to provide a basic standard of animal welfare in the developing world. They state that animals destined for slaughter should be slaughtered as close to the point of production as possible.

The WorldVet Association states in its Manuel that “Animals destined for slaughter should be transported as little as possible and should be killed as near to the point of production as possible. .. www.worldvet.org/manuals/T-3-1.pdf

The RSPCA states that “The RSPCA has long held the position that animals should be slaughtered as close to the point of production as possible. The RSPCA does not believe that the live export of animals for slaughter is justifiable due to the considerable risks to the welfare of animals involved.”

COMMUNIQUÉ FROM RSPCA AUSTRALIA BOARD | 20 JUNE 2011

The RSPCA in the UK recommends that

“transportation is kept to a minimum by slaughtering animals close to the point of production, and that animals are handled and safeguarded at all times during transport and slaughter by properly trained, competent and caring staff.”

<http://www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RSPCA/RSPCARedirect&pg=transportandslaughter>

Clearly, the live export trade violates these most basic and most generally accepted principles.

I therefore call upon this committee to show compassion and to recommend that the live export of animals to all countries be phased out over the next three years.

Terrie Templeton
14 July 2011