

Senate Inquiry: Improvements in animal welfare for Australian live exports

Introduction:

I am a fifty year old Australian citizen, born in South Africa but resident of Melbourne for over twenty-five years. I consider myself an intelligent, level-headed person, conscientious and caring.

Spark (Motivation):

Like many others in Australia, I watched with horror the ABC Television program "4 Corners" report on the subject of Indonesian abattoirs and the treatment of Australian-sourced livestock. The treatment of these animals was by far the most horrific thing I have ever seen.

What is wrong / Examples:

As a result of this report, I felt an urge to investigate the whole issue of livestock treatment and animal export further. In the weeks since the report was broadcast, I have endeavoured to learn as much as I can about the methods and practices currently in place, in both the Australian and foreign workplaces.

I do not believe Meat & Livestock Australia can be relied upon to put appropriate measures in place. They have had approximately 30 years to get this right and failed miserably at the cost of our animals.

The **OIE guidelines** are not sufficient to ensure our cattle and sheep are slaughtered in a humane fashion. As "stunning" is not mandatory in Indonesia, cattle and sheep are fully aware of their throats being slit, and can remain conscious for up to 2 minutes, slowly and painfully bleeding to death. This cruelty is totally unacceptable, and "stunning" should be made mandatory in all abattoirs, both in Australia and countries we currently export to.

Many documented cases have proven that countries Australia exports to, have little, or no regard for animal welfare. Most, if not all of these countries do not have laws in place to protect Australian cattle from unnecessary cruelty, and whatever laws they have in place, do not meet Australian standards.

Why it is wrong:

Investigations conducted by Animals Australia and the RSPCA have proven that cruelty to cattle and sheep begin when they are removed from the farms, loaded onto trucks, then finally transported onto the ships. These animals are kept confined in this unnatural and stressful environment for weeks at a time, with some of them dying due to thirst or starvation. The torture continues when they are slaughtered in the most inhumane way imaginable.

Moral Obligation:

We condemn those in Australia who are cruel to animals (pets), yet some seem to turn a blind eye to how these poor defenceless animals are treated in Indonesia. Australians will not, and cannot continue to condone such horrific and barbaric practices.

Questioning My Own Convictions:

I have learned so much about the meat trade since then, and am currently questioning whether meat is actually required for me to maintain a healthy diet.

Summary / Closing Remarks:

Educating and training will take years, as cruelty seems to be deeply entrenched, and it will be nigh on impossible to monitor all abattoirs in Indonesia. The only way to ensure our cattle are never exposed to this horrendous cruelty is to ban the international transport of live animal stock. There is no question in my mind that if this isn't done, the inhumane slaughtering of Australian cattle and sheep will continue in South East Asia and the Middle East.

Lucinda Smyth