

SUBMISSION by Dr. Robert K.Wansbrough

Animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets

Firstly it must be stressed that scientific evidence exists showing that the pain threshold of the animals in question is the same as that of a human being.

Science has shown that these animals are sentient, social animals who have emotions, develop relationships and suffer from physiological, neurological, psychological and behavioural stress in a way similar to humans.

Terms Of Reference for the independent review:

a) the facilities, treatment, handling and slaughter of livestock, exported from Australia, in the importing country for consistency with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) recommendations and standards set out in Terrestrial Animal Health Code (2010) published by the World Organisation for Animal Health and other relevant standards

Response:

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) standards for the slaughter of and the handling of animals prior to slaughter are inhumane.

They are far below Australian standards and are regarded as inhumane by most Australians.

Any standards which do not require the animal to be unconscious and unable to feel pain before being slaughtered is reprehensible.

No Australian government should allow the export of live animals and any parliamentarian who does not oppose the Live Animal Export Trade or is party to permitting it to continue, should be condemned.

b) the adequacy of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) as they apply to the preparation and export of all livestock with consideration of responsibilities for compliance and enforcement of the ASEL

Response:

As many sections of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) are outside the jurisdiction of the Australian government they are only able to be enforced under State & Territory legislation.

As the ASEL has not been legislated by any State or Territory then these standards DO NOT HAVE TO BE COMPLIED WITH and are UNENFORCEABLE.

This renders this part of the review to be FARCICAL.

c) the adequacy and effectiveness of current Australian regulatory arrangements for the live export trade

Response:

The regulations for the handling of animals prior to shipping are inadequate.
The regulations fail to protect these animals from cruel treatment once they leave Australia.

The following part of the regulation is completely unacceptable:

“A reportable mortality event occurs in a consignment if the mortality rate is equal to, or exceeds, the reportable level specified in the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock

For cattle, sheep and goats these levels are:

Cattle voyages less than ten days (short haul): 0.5%

Sheep and goats: 2%

Cattle voyages greater than or equal to ten days (long haul): 1%”

If 800,000 cattle are exported to Indonesia each year this means that 4,000 animals may die before anyone outside the exporting company has to be notified.

Australians should not be led by people who allow this to happen.

Live animal export must not become ‘Dead Animal Export’.

While Australian governments and Australian parliamentarians allow this to continue then Australia and all her inhabitants are failing in their ‘duty of care’ to these animals and stand to be condemned by other nations.

d) the types of livestock suitable (weight, age, body condition, breeds) for export as feeder or slaughter animals

Response:

No animals should be exported live for slaughter or as feeder animals.

There is scientific evidence which shows that exporting animals live causes physiological, neurological, psychological and behavioural stress on the animals.

It is unnatural for any animals to be placed in a floating vessel.

It is inhumane and cruel to place livestock on a moving, rocking ship for long periods in an abnormal environment from which they have no respite, are not removed from for weeks on end and are not allowed the opportunity to perform the natural behaviours of their species.

No livestock animal should be forced on to a floating vessel where there is a likelihood of having to endure storm conditions.

As stated above, a mortality rate of 0.5 – 2% before being ‘reportable’ is unacceptable and the Australian electorate should be made aware of these figures.

e) the extent of monitoring required for each export consignment of feeder or slaughter livestock, in a manner that ensures accurate and transparent reporting to the Australian Government of the condition of the livestock from departure from Australia up to and including the point of slaughter in the country of destination

This has not been done at an acceptable level in the past eighteen years and while monitoring of the operators, the equipment and the handling techniques is done by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and Livecorp who have a vested interest, then accurate, humane and acceptable monitoring will not occur

Veterinary inspectors in the current review panel sent to Indonesia have not been allowed access to the abattoirs so there is no assurance that monitoring in the future will prevent the cruel and inhumane conditions and handling that livestock are subjected to.

Monitoring to an acceptable standard of the Australian population can not be guaranteed in countries where Australians have no jurisdiction.

Once the livestock board a ship no monitoring to whatever degree will prevent the cruelty and inhumanity the animals suffer and thus the Live Animal Export Trade should be banned completely.

f) the risk management strategies necessary to address the welfare of animals from departure from Australia, up to and including the point of slaughter in the country of destination

The only acceptable 'risk management strategy' would be to slaughter animals as close to the point of production with minimal transport and handling.

In the case of cattle and pastoral sheep, these animals are unused to frequent handling and are fearful of humans. This increases the risk to their welfare throughout the live export process.

The pain level of physically, psychologically and behaviourally stressed animals is markedly reduced and thus any pain is intensified as it is in human beings.

As the current process does not fulfil the requirements to label the meat as Halal or Kosher then this is irrelevant.

g) other matters relevant to these terms of reference that the reviewer considers appropriate.

Australian meat producers need to be looking for other markets as Indonesia aims to be self-sufficient in the near future

Live animal export is a high risk industry and MLA should be looking at changing the attitude of meat importers as to the products they are prepared to export.

The establishment of abattoirs around Australia will improve the animal welfare of meat production making it more acceptable to the Australian people and will increase the number of jobs especially in Northern Australia

Domestic processing - Creates jobs and opportunities

The veterinary profession has been advocating a ban on all live animal transport for many years but have not even been able to get the Australian government(s) to allow veterinary presence at every aspect of the trade to ensure that it is humane.

Those who advocate that animal welfare issues can only be improved in other countries if Australia continues the Live Animal Export Trade, know this not to be the case and is only stated to justify maintaining this cruel inhumane industry.

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