

SUBMISSION - SENATE

It is important when making this submission that I point out my background. I was born in Bourke and spent my early years living on large grazing properties in Western NSW. I realise that the properties in Northern Australia are different to those in Western NSW and that the livestock kept on these properties is also different. Having spent my time growing up on properties running sheep and cattle I was fortunate to be able to learn first hand that these animals are sentient beings. I would also like to point out that I have written to my local Federal Member Mark Coulton several times about my concerns over live animal exports. I was most alarmed when I read his second reading speech which indicated that despite getting hundreds of emails from constituents in his electorate who opposed live exports he chose instead to go in to bat on behalf of cattle farmers in Northern Australia. I would also like to point out that on 18 June 2011 I protested in my local area (Dubbo), which is farming country. I received many favourable comments from passers by, thumbs up and horn beeps.

There has been insufficient time to respond in as much detail as I would have liked however I have made comments to each of the points.

Terms of Reference

On 16 June 2011, the Senate moved that the following matters be referred to the Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 25 August 2011:

1. Investigate and report into the role and effectiveness of Government, Meat and Livestock Australia, Livecorp and relevant industry bodies in improving animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets, including:

a) The level, nature and effectiveness of expenditure and efforts to promote or improve animal welfare standards with respect to all Australian live export market countries;

COMMENT. It is my view that MLA and Livecorp do not have animal welfare as their paramount concern. In 2010 The Meat and Livestock Authority (MLA) and Livecorp commissioned an independent report into "animal welfare conditions for cattle in Indonesia from point of arrival from Australia to slaughter". The Report indicated that the barbaric practices aired on For Corners were observed by the panel and reported to MLA and Livecorp. DAFF were also provided with a copy of the report.

I have read chapter 7.5 Slaughter of Animals as contained in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code. The code contains recommendations. Recommendations only. If the people conducting the slaughter chose not to follow these recommendations there is nothing legally Australia can do. Sending animals to be killed in countries where there are no laws to protect them from cruelty is inexcusable. The Australian law affords no protection to animals exported overseas for the purposes of food. Live exports should be banned.

i) expenditure and efforts on marketing and promoting live export to Australian producers;

COMMENT. Due to the fact that the Australian Government or any other Australian body has no control over what happens to the unfortunate animals once they leave our shores, live exports (for slaughter) should be banned. Sending animals to be killed in countries where there are no laws to protect them from cruelty is inexcusable. Not a single cent should be spent on promoting live export.

ii) ongoing monitoring of the subscription to, and practise of, animal welfare standards in all live export market countries;

COMMENT. Like the RSPCA, I believe that there are substantial problems with the livestock-export trade in general, and with ASEL in particular. Specific problems include:

- The majority of standards are effectively unenforceable under current legislation.
- Many are not measurable or able to be regulated.
- Exemptions from standards are permitted with no requirement for justification.
- There is an overall lack of transparency, reporting and feedback in the export process.
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- Loopholes in ASEL mean that not all animals are covered.

As the main regulatory agency for livestock exports, AQIS generally investigates deaths when they reach 2% of sheep and 1% of cattle. What is not investigated, is whether these animals were first noticed, treated or humanely killed. Another addition to the complexity of live export regulation is that, while at sea, the Australian Marine Safety Authority (AMSA) is responsible for animal welfare. It uses navigation and marine laws covering: ship design; food and water supplies; maximum number of animals and their stocking density; design of pens; and care of livestock onboard. The laws state the level of animal deaths that exporters must report to AMSA. Once notified, AMSA then reports the deaths to AQIS.

It is obvious there is a maze of regulation types and responsibilities in the Australian live export trade. It is no wonder it is difficult to identify and prosecute breaches relating to the welfare of exported animals.

The Australian law affords no protection to animals exported overseas for the purposes of food. Live animal exports should be banned. It is pointless to “monitor” the welfare of animals when there are no laws to protect the animals and no punitive measures in place for those who don’t follow recommendations.

iii) actions to improve animal welfare outcomes in all other live export market countries and the evidence base for these actions.

COMMENT. What sort of “actions” does the Government have in mind?
“Evidence base” and “actions” needs to be defined.

b) The extent of knowledge of animal welfare practices in Australia's live export markets including:

i) formal and informal monitoring and reporting structures;

COMMENT. The livestock export industry has demonstrated on numerous occasions that it has failed to regulate itself.

Evidence gathered from importing countries has shown that inhumane slaughter and handling practices, that would be contrary to Australian laws and standards, are common. The adoption of a chilled and frozen meat-only trade would prevent the suffering inherent in long-distance sea transport and save millions of animals from the cruel fate awaiting them at their destination.

ii) formal and informal processes for reporting and addressing poor animal welfare practices.

COMMENT. The livestock export industry has demonstrated on numerous occasions that it has failed to regulate itself.

Evidence gathered from importing countries has shown that inhumane slaughter and handling practices, that would be contrary to Australian laws and standards, are common. The adoption of a chilled and frozen meat-only trade would prevent the suffering inherent in long-distance sea transport and save millions of animals from the cruel fate awaiting them at their destination.

2. Investigate and report on the domestic economic impact of the live export trade within Australia including:

a) Impact on regional and remote employment especially in northern Australia;

People in Northern Australia who rely on the live export industry should find more ethical and decent ways to earn a living (that does not involved extreme cruelty to animals).

b) Impact and role of the industry on local livestock production and prices;

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c) Impact on the processing of live stock within Australia.

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once they leave our shores, live exports (for slaughter) should be banned. Sending animals to be killed in countries where there are no laws to protect them from cruelty is inexcusable.

3. Other related matters.

I find it unacceptable for Australia to continue the vile and cruel live animal export trade in the knowledge that we can never ensure the wellbeing of our animals from the moment they leave our shores. What the Four Corners footage showed us occurring in an Indonesian slaughterhouse was torture.

In conclusion I would like to add that I am sick and tired of politicians saying that they oppose animal cruelty. Yet when asked if they oppose the inherently cruel live export trade I hear excuses along party political lines.

As humans we are capable of reflecting upon our behaviour and assessing the ethical implications of our actions and change our thinking and behaviour.

Kind Regards

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