

## **Submission – Animal Welfare Standards in Australia’s Live Export Markets**

The Minister for Agriculture’s decision to suspend the live export of cattle to Indonesia was a bad decision – made without any consultation with Indonesia or with the Australian live cattle export industry. The impact of the decision on northern cattle producers was not considered – we are currently enduring a period of great hardship, where we will receive no income from the live export trade for a minimum of 12 months. The impact of the decision on the Indonesian people was also not considered. The Minister for Agriculture has done irreversible damage to our relationship with Indonesia. His decision has cut-off a major food source to a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country. The companies and abattoirs doing the ‘right thing’ should not have been penalised.

Levy monies generated through the sale of Australian cattle destined for live export to Indonesia should be used to assist the Indonesians to improve the standards of their abattoirs. It is our industry money and it should be used to improve and protect the live export industry. As a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country, the Indonesians obviously need our financial support to improve the standards of their abattoirs to meet world standards (or preferably go beyond through the use of stunning). The abattoirs must be audited on a regular basis.

Training of slaughtermen in all Indonesian abattoirs must occur. These slaughtermen must have undergone training if they want to work in the abattoirs and their competence should be audited when the abattoirs are audited. As Indonesia is a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country, levy monies generated through the sale of Australian cattle destined for live export to Indonesia should be used to assist them to fund this training or Australia should provide assistance through the provision of trainers (paid using the cattle transaction levy) who must be able to speak Indonesian. Don’t allow trainers who cannot speak the native language of the people they are training.

The slaughtermen must have access to suitable equipment (knives, stun guns, etc). This equipment must be available for use at the abattoirs to ensure the humane slaughter of cattle. This would take the onus away from the slaughtermen to provide their own equipment which may not be suitable, as they may not have the money to purchase decent equipment. The equipment they are using obviously needs to be audited when the abattoirs are audited.

There must be a regular independent audit of the traceability systems in place from paddock, through the exporter and the feedlot, to the point of slaughter. However, I believe that the focus should be on improving the standards of all Indonesian abattoirs and not just on the traceability of Australian cattle in Indonesia. The humane slaughter of all cattle is important.

Our cattle station is 1,895 km<sup>2</sup> and we employ 12 staff and the station also supports 9 family members. We sell about 4,500 – 5,000 head annually to the Indonesian live export trade. Money generated from selling cattle to the Indonesian live export trade is our major source of income and we cannot operate without this income.

The live export of cattle to Indonesia must continue for the economic and environmental sustainability of northern Australia.

Our cattle are ideal for live export to Indonesia and the Indonesian people like buying our cattle. Our family has invested \$1 million over the past 6 years into the genetics of our Brahman cattle to better suit the Indonesian market. Due to this high content of Brahman, they are not suitable for the southern Australian markets, where the softer British bred cattle are

preferential. We also cannot afford to transport all of our sale cattle to southern markets. Transporting large numbers that distance is cost prohibitive, particularly with the current diesel prices. We do not receive enough money now for our cattle – we are receiving around the same prices that our parents were receiving 20 years ago, yet costs of living, wages, fuel, transport and all other products we require to operate a cattle station have increased substantially.

Stopping live export and only exporting boxed beef is not an option. The Indonesians need to import cattle to support their feedlot industry and we need to sell them live cattle to support the cattle industry in northern Australia. If the Indonesians wanted boxed beef then they would have been importing it in that form, however it does not suit their culture or their diet. They make use of the whole animal, yet we can not export the whole animal in a box – only live.

Our station, like most other stations in northern Australia, is suitable for breeding cattle – not for fattening cattle. If we had to grow all of our steers and cull heifers out to slaughter weight to be killed here in Australia, then we would struggle to survive the costs and time required to do this. It would be a very inefficient way to utilise the land that we have.

The most cost effective turn-off point for our cattle is when they are 12-18 months of age, weighing 270 to 330 kg – the ideal weight and age for the Indonesian live export market.

We need an abattoir in the Darwin region for slaughtering our cattle over 350kg, which are unable to be exported to Indonesia. At the moment we have to truck these cattle all the way to Queensland, New South Wales or South Australia to be slaughtered. The cattle lose a great deal of weight and condition during transportation and we as the seller therefore lose a lot of money, as we are paid on weight. We often receive very little return for our animal, as the costs far outweigh the price we receive. We fear that there could be animal welfare issues generated by people being forced to transport their cattle such long distances, particularly when they are under financial pressure.

If required, we would tag all of our cattle destined for live export to Indonesia with an NLIS tag, to ensure they are traceable from our paddock to the point of slaughter. Despite the cost of \$3.30/tag associated with this, if it means that our cattle are traceable, we would make an allowance for this cost. We could not afford to implant more expensive livestock identification products.

Don't force our expenditure to escalate through imposing any major costs on us, as we will go bankrupt and be forced to sell our station, which will probably be purchased by an international company. Support the live export industry and support the farming families that rely on it!