

Livestock Export Trade

I would firstly like to express my horror in seeing the four corners story on the treatment of Australian cattle in Indonesia, but just as horrifying is the treatment of the cattle and sheep in the Middle East. For years now I have had to see story after story about the cruel torture these animals have to endure when they reach their destination. I believe that Australia's part in the live trade industry needs to end as soon as practical. Given all the time and money that has gone into raising standards, and the fact that year after year we still see terrible pictures of cruelty, Australia should no longer support it. It's shown to be an industry deeply seeded in animal cruelty and this is undeniable. I find it my moral obligation to object to the continuation of this trade.

Animal Welfare

The livestock export industry has failed to meet the OIE standards in the slaughter of livestock. The majority of the facilities that the livestock are slaughtered in also do not meet any welfare standards set out either. The evidence that has been brought to the public attention over the last 8 years, of animals being tortured, sometimes while trying to subdue them, sometimes just for the fun of it, only goes to show that for all the years that Australia has been involved, the basic concept of animal welfare has fallen short and still does. It's also been shown that we can't control all aspects of the live export industry. There will always be a part of this industry that falls into the hands of the country that we export to. This is the part that shows the most extreme cases of cruelty, though not the only cases or instances of cruelty. While these countries that we export to continue to have animal welfare laws that are either inadequate or don't allow for prosecution on breaches of the laws, then we will have our hands tied on what we can enforce as far as standards are concerned. We will once again be sitting down in our lounge rooms watching graphic pictures of animal being tortured. Australians don't want to be involved in this anymore. Live exports are unnecessarily cruel to the animals shipped abroad and their poor treatment and substandard living conditions are well documented. I would like to bring to your attention the report by Dr Bidja Jones from RSPCA Australia written on observation of the footage taken in Indonesia. It's very compelling reading and needs to form part of this enquiry. <http://banliveexport.com/documents/RSPCA-Australia-2011-Slaughter-of-Australian-Cattle-in-Indonesia.pdf>

The below six points are referenced from Animals Australia.

- During the last 30 years, Australia has sent more than 150 million sheep and cattle to be slaughtered in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East and South East Asia. Depending on their destination, the journey by boat can take up to 3 weeks, during which time the animals remain in cramped conditions and must endure all weather extremes.
- Every year, thousands of animals die during the journey. In 2010, just under 30,000 sheep died en route to the Middle East and 1,000 cattle died on ships.
- The majority of countries importing Australian animals have no laws to protect animals from cruelty.
- Sheep exported to the Middle East, are routinely mishandled, dragged, and many have their legs bound together and are thrown in the boots of cars, in a region that often has temperatures hovering near 50°C in summer.
- Cattle exported to Indonesia are routinely treated brutally prior to slaughter, including being tripped to the floor by ropes. Common abuses documented include: eye gouging, being whipped, hit and kicked, having their tail broken and even having their leg tendons slashed. Similar abuse of cattle has been documented in the Middle East.
- The vast majority of Australian animals exported to the Middle East and South East Asian countries, including Indonesia, are slaughtered whilst fully conscious. Animals Australia's investigation in Indonesia revealed cattle were suffering an average of 11 cuts to the throat and often many minutes of pain, thrashing and bellowing before losing consciousness.

The Industry

Australia is forcing a lot of money into this industry, yet exports have fallen by 10% in 2011, and this is without the ban on live export's affects to Indonesia even being considered. One of the most disappointing aspects of this industry is its lack of transparency. Industries such as LiveCorp and MLA are on the ground in these countries, yet fail to adequately act upon the animal welfare breeches that they see. It takes non profit organisations such as Animals Australia to show Australia what is occurring. This industry has shown it can't be trusted to ensure that the welfare of the animals are a priority. This industry is problematic. It has shown that it is unable to understand the issues in Indonesia. Its training programs are inadequate and have been shown to be lacking. MLA themselves admit that its impossible to give real training. They have said that they will go into a slaughter house, train the workers and come back a later and those workers have been replaced by new ones.

When questioned about MLA's knowledge of the treatment experienced by Australian cattle in certain abattoirs, Mr Finucan of MLA responded: "We've been working up here for many years and we've always known that there's issues, and that's why we commit resources and time and energy and effort in being in Jakarta. We've always known there's more to do, and we've always been upfront that that's what we are doing." MLA were then quick to say they didn't know of the animal cruelty actions in the slaughter houses that they train in and that actually use their Mark 1 boxes. Which statement from MLA do we believe, and I think this is the whole issue with their lack of transparency.

MLA are also the industry that introduced the Mark 1 boxes into Indonesia, supported by money not only from MLA, but also from the government. As far back as 2003 problems were identified with the use of these restraints. These boxes have been globally slammed as being cruel to the animals. Where do MLA do their research? How can you put something into practice that causes more suffering? Surely if this is as good as it gets with MLA and their research departments, then this is a disgraceful waste of farmers and taxpayers money. Its been said that restraint is often one of the most stressful and potentially painful aspects of the slaughter process, and the downfall of these boxes has added to the stress and pain that the cattle are suffering.

Australians pride themselves in their forward thinking, yet we are so far behind countries such as New Zealand, who banned the live export of animals for slaughter for reasons of animal cruelty a few years ago. They actually started the process to ban live exports after seeing a boat load of Australian sheep caught up in a horrible tragedy known as the "Cormo Express". It wasn't even their own sheep, but they were so deeply moved by this horror, that they banned the industry. People in the industry, who speak up about animal welfare standards not meeting Australian standards are quickly dealt with, rather than the problem they were speaking up about being resolved - reference 60 minutes report on the Cormo Express - <http://sixtyminutes.ninemsn.com.au/article/259096/ship-of-shame>

I think we should also consider the affect this industry is having on countries, and I will focus on Indonesia. We are undermining their farmers, many who live way below the poverty line. How is this helping a country to move forward? I have read "Indonesian cattle farmers were already suffering through the live cattle trade. The numbers of commercial-scale Indonesian producers have fallen by a third since 2003, with many unable to compete with the big Australian producer's comparative advantage of scale. Currently Indonesians pay Australians around \$AUD400 million a year for live cattle. Perhaps some of this money would be better off circulating within Indonesia, expanding the capacity of local producers with high-quality breeding programs, investing in infrastructure, and raising standards in abattoirs, rather than principally benefiting a few corporate giants that dominate the live cattle trade in Australia." Referenced from an abc news online article - <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/content/2011/s3248465.htm> from an interview with Henry Saragih the Chairperson of Indonesian Peasant Union (SPI) and also the General Coordinator of International Peasant Movement La Via Campesina.

Not only are we undermining the Indonesian farming community, we are also causing job losses within Australia. The livestock export industry has been part of Australia's history for 30 years now, only one generation. For 30 years we have been expanding facilities to allow this trade to continue, at the expense of other industries within Australia. Grant Courtney of the Meat Workers Unions says "Our members are experiencing the negative impact of the live sheep export trade firsthand. Over the last 30 years the meat processing industry has suffered the loss of 40,000 jobs and 150 processing plants. We know that many plants are currently working at only 50% capacity and that many workers are only able to work three days a week. We urge the Australian Government to take the findings of this report on board."

Three separate independent economic reports over the past two years have found that live exports are undermining Australia's meat processing industry. The below is references from an online newspaper article
http://www.meatradenewsdaily.co.uk/news/060611/australia___live_exports_are_undermining_a_ustralias_meat_processing_industry.aspx

Sheep - ACIL Tasman's reviews into the live sheep trade found that phasing out live sheep exports would have a minimal impact on farmers and would in fact reap long-term benefits for farmers and the economy through increased processing in Australia.

Cattle - In 2010, a report commissioned by Australia's leading meat processors - Teys Bros, Swift Australia and Nippon Meat Packers Australia – reached damning conclusions as to the impact of live cattle exports on Queensland's beef industry.

The report found:

- Live cattle exports are cannibalising Queensland's beef-processing industry and threaten to destroy \$3.5 billion worth of assets, \$5 billion in turnover and 36,000 jobs.
- Far from being complementary, live exports compete with and undermine Australia's beef exports.
- Live cattle exports equals Australian job losses and a threat to Australia's capacity to supply the growing world demand for beef.
- Queensland cattle are increasingly being exported live to Indonesia taking with them lost processing opportunities in Queensland.
- Indonesia actively protects its own beef industry and live cattle imports by banning key beef cuts and imposing high tariffs on imported beef product – there is not a level playing field.
- Live cattle exports means premium disease-free cattle are being processed in importing countries and sold in competition with genuine imported Australian beef.

Australia's major meat processors have confirmed that Australia has the capacity to process all cattle and sheep currently going to live export.

Contrary to industry claims, live export does not underpin 10,000 jobs in the rural sector. The majority of those jobs would remain if animals were processed in Australia. In fact thousands of jobs would be created by increased domestic processing.

In light of the above facts and findings, I find that to continue on with the live trade industry will be detrimental in the long term to Australian industries and just as importantly, to the welfare of animals bred and raised in Australia. To discontinue live export and expand our chilled / frozen meat industries will also allow Australia to ensure that animal welfare standards are maintained in all parts of the business. This can only be a positive outcome for the whole of Australia, rather than having a positive outcome to a small portion of Australia that deals with live export.