

WOLLONGONG ISLAMIC SOCIETY INC.

14th July 2011

SENATE INQUIRY

IMPROVEMENT TO ANIMAL WELFARE FOR AUSTRALIAN LIVE EXPORTS

Wollongong Islamic Society Inc. wishes to make the following submission to the inquiry:

INTRODUCTION

The national Beef herd now stands at 28 million. The break down State by State is as follows:

- Queensland 12.3 million
- New South Wales 5.9 million
- Victoria 3.9 million
- Western Australia 2.3 million
- Northern Territory 1.7 million
- South Australia 1.2 million
- Tasmania 700,000 and
- ACT 6,000

Nationally the beef industry employs 120,000 workers. Based on 2009 figures the whole industry is worth 7.6 billion dollars a year, approximately 1% of gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2009 live cattle exports was worth 650 million dollars. These exports went predominantly to Indonesia (72%), China (11%) and Israel (3%).

In Australia approximately 9 million head of cattle are slaughtered humanely using the stunning method. Australia is the second largest exporter of beef to world markets with 927,000 tonnes of meat worth 4.3 billion dollars exported in 2009.

During 2010 approximately 840,000 live cattle were exported.

Under the present system of live exports Wollongong Islamic Society (WIS) sees the following issues with respect to the treatment of animals:-

(a) Transportation

Every effort should be made to reduce the mortality rate during sea transportation. The mortality rate is governed by the duration of the journey and the overcrowding and congestion of the animals on board the ship.

The average mortality rate is 0.1%, but this figure jumps to 20% on longer journeys. The main cause of death is

- heat stress
- failure to eat
- injuries
- food poisoning
- trauma and
- pneumonia

Generally far too many animals are transported by ship in congested sub standard conditions. There must be a balance between viability of transportation and the welfare of the animals.

At the moment excessive profits are being made at the expense of animal welfare

(b) Conditions of sale

Once the cattle have reached their overseas destination it is out of the jurisdiction of Australian authorities, however if at the time of sale some

conditions are imposed on the importing country as to how these animals must be treated up until the completion of the slaughter process it may work in Australia's favour. These conditions would form part of the sale contract.

Unfortunately most Muslim countries do not have any Legislative framework in place for the welfare of animals so it should be mandatory for Australia to impose standards such as those practiced here. Australia should also be prepared to offer assistance to any country wishing to improve their slaughter standards by providing best practice models to the Governments of these countries and if necessary financial assistance to implement the models.

(c) Accreditation of Abattoirs in Indonesia

Not only do we have to make sure that the animals are transported comfortably, humanely and safely, but also Australia has to ensure that the animal at the time of slaughter, experiences minimum pain and stress. Stunning the animal before slaughtering must be made a mandatory condition of sale. Stunning will ensure that the animal is unconscious when slaughtered and the process of stunning must be carried out whilst the animal is standing on its feet. The intensity of stunning should be such that if the animal is left un-slaughtered it should be able to get up and walk away. Stunning is the most humane way of rendering the animals unconscious before slaughtering and it ensures that they suffer the least amount of pain and suffering.

Guidelines based on the above principles should be provided to the abattoirs and only those abattoirs that are completely complying with the provided principles should be accredited.

The Australian Government should take leadership in providing whatever assistance is required by these abattoirs to build new infrastructure, train workers and provide appropriate equipment so that not only can accreditation be achieved but also humane Halal slaughter. The practice of brutal torture of animals must be stopped. Compliance inspections would need to be carried out on a regular basis. Australia must also be ready to carry out the necessary and agreed disciplinary action in the event of breaches being found.

WIS would like to comment with respect to point number 2 of the Terms of Reference:- Investigate and report on the domestic economic impact of the live export trade within Australia

WIS believes that if the 800,000 - 900,000 head of cattle currently being exported to various countries if slaughtered here in Australia it will achieve the following objectives:-

2.1 Employment

It is estimated that if these cattle are slaughtered then exported from regional Australia instead of being live exported it will provide employment for approximately 17,000 workers. Regional Australia will become more prosperous.

2.2 Economy

In terms of overall economy, if the animals are slaughtered here in Australia will achieve a net gain of 20% more to the Halal economy of Australia than what the live export trade produces.

2.3 Standards

Slaughtering the animals in Australia will also ensure that the currently high standards of animal welfare established here would be maintained which is in the best interest of the animals and will also provide surety to Australians everywhere.

In relation to Point 3- Other related Matters

Wollongong Islamic Society Inc. (WIS Inc.) does not support the marketing of live animals. WIS believes that most Muslim countries do not have Legislative framework in place to treat animals humanely and with least pain at the time of slaughter, not to speak of suffering during the process of transportation via sea resulting in the death of a high number of animals.

WIS and Halal Kind Meats (HKM) will recommend to the inquiry that more abattoirs be opened in regional Australia, mostly in Northern Territory, Western Australia and Northern Queensland for Halal and non Halal slaughter. Funds should be directed towards promoting more abattoirs in Australia.

Through the provision of Australian Government funding both WIS and HKM have the expertise to facilitate foreign investment in opening new abattoirs in Australia. We can invite investors to Australia to introduce them to the Australian standard of abattoirs and the viability and profitability of doing business with us.

WIS and HKM believes that if the animals are slaughtered here in Australia the employment prospects would be 17,000 new jobs not to mention the 20% increase to the Australian Halal meat economy.

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