

Submission

Animal Welfare Standards in Australia's Live Export Markets

1.

a) There is no doubt that the live export trade is one of the cruelest industries in the world. Given this fact, the Australian live export industry should never have been self-regulated. According to some employees working in the trade such as on the export boats and in other areas live export is an industry that is open to false reporting, cover-ups, and animal welfare carelessness so it should be regulated by the government. Meat and Livestock Australia and Livecorp have already failed miserably with regards to animal welfare and are too interested in profits to be reliable enough to ensure the welfare of Australian animals for export. To successfully monitor the live export trade is a pipe dream.

i) Many millions of dollars could be spent on marketing and promoting live export to Australian producers to no avail as these producers already know about the industry and the profits to be made and if more of them began producing animals for export the domestic market would suffer even more than it does now, and there would be a risk of the live export trade becoming an industry that would have an over-supply of cattle.

ii) Any money spent on the ongoing monitoring of the subscription to, and practice of animal welfare standards in all live export market countries, would be a waste as these importing countries have their own standards and their nature is that (as we have seen in Indonesia) they won't agree to the practice of all of the Australian government animal welfare conditions in their own country. They will treat Australian animals as they wish. Also, even if they do agree to Australian welfare requirements there is no realistic way they could be policed therefore the fate of Australian animals will still be in their hands. I doubt very much that any monitoring of the welfare of Australian animals to our standards would be allowed by importing countries. Also, it would require a huge amount of staff to do this and they would have to be Australian because staff in the importing countries would be too unreliable to do any monitoring in a transparent manner.

iii) Given the fact that importing countries have little if any animal welfare laws the live export industry would have to invest vast sums of money to educate and implement any actions to improve animal welfare outcomes in these countries and if it could be done then it would take years. Also, vast sums of money would have to be invested to do a study on the evidence base needed for these actions. The industry has had more than 18 years to clean up the live export trade and achieve good animal welfare practice in importing countries. After all this time it has failed. Any animal welfare improvements in these countries would take many years to achieve but I doubt it would be possible. In the mean time Australian animals still being exported would still be subject to poor animal welfare.

b)

i) Why would the industry or the Australian Government invest in formal and informal monitoring and reporting structures in live export markets? These countries have such little regard for animal welfare that I doubt very much that they could be relied upon for any realistic or honest formal or informal monitoring of animal welfare or correctly use any reporting structures.

As for our live export industry, it had enough knowledge of poor animal welfare from the time the animals departed Australia through to the point of slaughter but they turned a blind eye to any formal and informal monitoring and reporting structures. Those in the industry found the percentages of mortality on the boats acceptable because they were low, however, mortality of one percent of a shipment could mean thousands of animals. This is far too high and unacceptable. There is no doubt that the industry and government had plenty of knowledge of what was happening to these animals and yet they let it continue in the name of profits.

ii) It is highly improbable that any normal and informal processes for reporting and addressing poor animal welfare practices in live export markets would work effectively. It would be too open to sloppy recording, manipulation of figures, turning a blind eye to cruelty so the perpetrator could keep his job, and false reporting to make animal welfare standards look effective when they may not be. The only way to ensure good animal welfare practices would occur in live export markets would be to have Australian staff there 24/7.

2.

a) Many Australian jobs were lost and many northern abattoirs were closed when the live export trade began. Some northern abattoirs were seasonal but were still managing to operate until the live export trade began and they could no longer get enough cattle to process. Back in 2000 a report by S G Helibron Pty Ltd commissioned by the Australian Meat Processor corporation estimated that the live export trade had cost the Australian economy \$1.5 billion in lost GDP, around \$270 million in household income and around 10,500 jobs. Even last year over 700 meat workers had either been laid off or had their shifts severely cut back.

Any poor animal welfare reports such as the brutal slaughter of cattle in Indonesia also portrays the domestic beef industry in a poor light. Quote from the AMIC website following the Four Corners program 'A Bloody Business' : "AMIC encourages the Government to intervene to prevent these issues from re-occurring in the future as it only serves to undermine the Australian meat processing industry. "

b) Much of the local livestock production in northern areas turned towards the live export industry because they thought more money could be made by selling the cattle to importing countries rather than locally. Two abattoirs in Townsville alone were closed

because there were not enough cattle to process. I remember there was a thriving domestic cattle industry prior to the live export trade beginning. There is no reason why this can't resume again and return jobs to local meat processors. The sad thing is that when the live export trade began it not only took jobs away from our own people but also money out of the small towns where the abattoirs were operating at full capacity and had to close because of the lack of cattle to process.

According to the State of Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, 2010 it was expected that Queensland beef cattle numbers would be less than 11.6 million by 30 June 2010.

One of the main reasons for this expected decline was: the increase in live cattle exports from 56 087 head in 2007–08 to 176 859 in 2008–09. These were also expected to increase by 4.4% in 2009–10

c) The live export industry has had a huge and detrimental impact on the processing of livestock in Australia, especially for the northern abattoirs and meat workers.

According to Ian McLauchlan, AMIEU Assistant Branch Secretary, meat workers can understand the reason why cattle can't get to the abattoirs because of floods and wet weather, but it is very difficult for meat workers to accept that they are being stood down through lack of cattle numbers when boats are leaving our shores with thousands of head of cattle heading to Indonesia to their feedlots. He also said there had been a lot of lost days in 2009 and 2010 with lack of cattle being available for slaughter due to live exports.

Mr. McLauchlan says it all, there's no doubt that the live export industry has had a very detrimental effect on the local beef industry.

A report commissioned by the Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd: 'Impact of the live animal export sector on the Australian meat processing industry' (2000) stated that by competing directly with the chilled meat trade internationally, the live animal trade creates national losses in GDP amounting to around \$1.5 billion and around \$270 million in household income.

It is well known in the community that the live export industry's profitability exists because it receives significant Australian government incentives and advantages from tariff and non-tariff trade barriers in export markets.

Summary

If the Australian Government followed what's set out in number 2 of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (2010)* Guiding Principles of Animal Welfare: "That the internationally recognized 'five freedoms' (freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and *disease*; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour) provide valuable guidance in *animal welfare*." then there would be no Live Export

Industry as the export animals don't have freedom from fear and distress, freedom from physical and thermal discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and disease or freedom to express normal patterns of behavior.

This paragraph alone should be enough reason for the Australian government to end this cruel trade.

Thank you,

Belle Gibbons (wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, businesswoman)