

3 June 2011

The Hon. Joe Ludwig
Minister for Agriculture
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

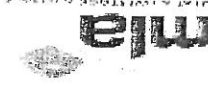
Indonesia Animal Welfare Involving Australian Cattle

The Four Corners program of 30th May highlighted grossly unacceptable animal welfare being applied to some Australian livestock in Indonesia which has been condemned by the industry, by Government and by the Australian community. No one has been more distressed by the Four Corners images than the signatories to this letter and the Australian cattle and exporters who supply cattle to this market. You have asked the industry to create a plan to assure the welfare of Australian cattle being processed in Indonesia. The attached document meets that request.

Minister, the acceptance of this Plan would allow the trade to continue, albeit on a reduced scale and only expanding as international standards relating to animal welfare are met.

In particular, the attached Plan addresses your request that assurances be provided right along the supply chain that the treatment of cattle meets acceptable animal welfare standards and that cattle are directed into appropriate facilities. It does this by suggesting that abattoirs and feedlots are accredited for handling Australian cattle, with a requirement that accredited abattoirs meet OIE standards of animal welfare. The Plan also commits the industry to investing in abattoir equipment in Indonesia, including stunning equipment, to raise animal welfare standards. A rapid increase in stunning is central to the Plan.

Through consultation with the Indonesian feedlotters a list of facilities, that potentially meet the criteria in the attached Plan, is being compiled. Although the accreditation of plants would be conducted by a team of independent veterinary experts, we believe there may be 25 or more plants that would immediately qualify, with 5 of these being modern, advanced, facilities using stunning. The 25 plants currently account for about 40% of the trade. It is important that the Plan be implemented quickly, with abattoirs accredited within two weeks. It will also be important to put effort into growing the list of accredited abattoirs, whilst ensuring appropriate animal welfare standards are consistently applied. It needs to be recognised that the Indonesians depend on Australian live cattle for a significant portion of their beef needs and that, notwithstanding the images shown on Monday night's program, a significant number of Indonesian abattoirs are meeting OIE standards. We request Government cooperation to help achieve a rapid accreditation process.



We presume that dialogue has occurred between the Australian Government and Indonesian Government over issues highlighted in last Monday's Four Corners program. It will be important to have Indonesian Government support for the measures outlined in the Plan, including for increased stunning. Accreditation of abattoirs is not a new concept and many importing countries require the accreditation of export plants to supply beef to their country. The attached plan suggests an extension of this concept to provide assurances to the Australian Government and community of the standards applied to Australian cattle processed in Indonesia.

Prior to this Plan being fully implemented the Australian industry and Indonesian feedlotters have taken a number of steps to try to prevent the scenes witnessed on Monday night from occurring. We cannot guarantee to immediately prevent any instance of unsatisfactory welfare practices in Indonesia – we have no power to do so. However, the industry on 30 May placed a team of 7 Australian cattle handlers in the market to supplement our existing team of 4. This team is working on a priority set of abattoirs to oversee the management of Australian animals. They are on hand to ensure that the restraining boxes are used appropriately and within OIE guidelines. This team will be expanded to 20 plus cattle handlers over the next 2 weeks to ensure industry has a presence at a core group of facilities. As per your request we are working with APFINDO members to prevent Australian cattle being processed in the unsatisfactory abattoirs identified in Monday night's program.

Minister, we hope that you will favourably consider the attached Industry Plan.

Yours sincerely



Don Heatley
Chairman
Meat and Livestock Australia



Roly Nieper
Chairman
LiveCorp



Greg Brown
President
Cattle Council of Australia



Peter Kane
Chairman
Australian Livestock Export Council



Industry Plan for Assuring the Welfare of Australian Cattle Processed in Indonesia

The Four Corners program of 30th May, highlighted grossly unacceptable animal welfare being applied to some Australian livestock in Indonesia which have been condemned by the industry, by Government and by the Australian community. No one has been more distressed by the Four Corners images than Australian cattle producers and exporters who supply cattle to this market. The aim of the plan outlined in this paper is to prevent the instances of animal cruelty and poor slaughter practices, witnessed on Monday night's Four Corners program, from occurring. The plan achieves this by accrediting abattoirs in Indonesia to process Australian cattle, these abattoirs complying with world acceptable animal welfare standards. Supply chains supplying these abattoirs would be similarly accredited, ensuring Australian cattle are directed to abattoirs with acceptable animal welfare standards. The Plan conforms to the OIE Regional Animal Strategy for Asia, the Far East and Oceania.

The Plan responds to a request by the Minister, and by many cattle producers, for the industry to prevent Australian cattle in Indonesia suffering from acts of animal cruelty or from poor animal welfare practices. The Plan has been drawn up by the Australian industry. It would benefit from discussion and input from the Australian Government, Indonesian Government and Indonesian industry.

Criteria for Creating a List of Abattoirs with Acceptable Animal Welfare Standards

A preliminary audit has been conducted of abattoirs in Indonesia. Based on this audit abattoirs have been categorised in terms of animal welfare standards into 4 levels – see Table 1 for the categorisation criteria. There are about 100 abattoirs in Indonesia slaughtering Australian cattle.

- There are a limited number of abattoirs in Indonesia that are classified with "A" level animal welfare standards. All these abattoirs are modern, advanced, facilities using stunning. It is recommended that trade be allowed to continue to feedlotters using these abattoirs. For these abattoirs there is high confidence that appropriate animal welfare standards are consistently applied. Nevertheless, it is recommended that periodic checks are made on these abattoirs by an independent team of veterinary experts, approved by the Australian and Indonesian Ministers of Agriculture, to ensure that high animal welfare standards continue.

- The preliminary audit indicates that there are a number of other abattoirs in Indonesia that meet OIE sanctioned levels of animal welfare ("B" level). At least two of these have recently commenced stunning operations. Others use restraining boxes with a high level of proficiency. It is to be noted that OIE standards do not require stunning.

It is recommended that the independent team of veterinary experts examine these abattoirs for accreditation purposes. If deemed suitable, these abattoirs would also be accredited for processing Australian cattle. As an additional level of assurance, however, the Australian industry would pay for an Animal Welfare Officer to be permanently stationed at these abattoirs during hours of operation to ensure the proper operation of restraining boxes. If systematic box misuse occurs, or if animal cruelty is witnessed, the accreditation of the abattoir would be revoked.

The Australian industry is committed to investing in improved restraining boxes in these abattoirs and to quickly transitioning a significant number of these abattoirs to stunning. In particular, the Australian industry is committed to meeting the cost of introducing better boxes than the Mark 1 design in these abattoirs within a year and in meeting the cost of stunning equipment. The better box designs to be investigated include slaughterer box designs out of Europe and those on the Temple Grandin website.

- Over time the intention would be to lift as many of these Level "B" abattoirs to Level "A" standards of animal welfare as possible.
- Although welfare standards were seen to have been improved at the remaining abattoirs, under the new system they would not be accredited for processing Australian cattle until they could consistently meet OIE standards. The Australian industry is, however, committed to raising standards in these abattoirs so that over time at least some of these abattoirs can be raised to Level "B" and Level "A" welfare standards.

A system to confine the slaughter of Australian cattle to accredited facilities.

The current supply chain to Indonesia involves Australian exporters selling to Indonesian feedlotter who sell to butchers who may sell to other butchers who slaughter the cattle and market the beef. With a supply chain this long control is sometimes lost over where cattle are finally slaughtered.

To gain a higher assurance of where cattle are finally slaughtered this supply chain must be shortened with the feedlotter taking greater responsibility.

- It is recommended that a list of accredited feedlotter be constructed (and that only feedlotter be accredited as importers of cattle). Exporters would only be provided with export permits if the sale was to an accredited feedlot.
- It is recommended that to be accredited the feedlotter must give assurances that he will retain control of the cattle to the point of slaughter and that slaughter will only occur in accredited abattoirs. If cattle consigned to the feedlotter are slaughtered in non-accredited abattoir, the accreditation of the feedlotter would be revoked.
- Within a timeframe that is as short as practical this system would be backed using NLLS tags at point of slaughter would be checked off against cattle consigned to the feedlotter. The feedlotter would be required to explain any discrepancies between the number of cattle consigned and the number of cattle slaughtered. If the explanation was not sufficient the accreditation of the feedlotter would be revoked.

Summary.

The industry recognises that implementing the plan outlined above will be a costly exercise and is willing to commit significant funds to achieve the results desired and to raise levels of animal welfare generally in Indonesia.

To be fully effective the plan requires the strong commitment of the Indonesian Government.

Table 1

Category	Definition
Level "A"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern well maintained facility that is clean, well lit, etc • Equipment maintained and in good working order • Receival ramp, lairage and race well designed and maintained • Well training staff in the animal handling concepts • High confidence that appropriate animal welfare standards are consistently applied • Practicing stunning effectively • Owner / operator / Butcher is co-operative • Use of sharp knife of appropriate length.
Level "B"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well maintained facility. • Equipment maintained and in good working order • Receival ramp, lairage and race well designed and maintained • Staff have been trained and demonstrate understanding of animal handling concepts • Utilising a restraining device (Mk1, Mk4, copy box or recently introduced stunning) as per SOP's • Owner / operator / Butcher is co-operative • Use of sharp knife of appropriate length.
Level "C"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities have less investment, old and have a lack of maintenance and require minor improvements • Equipment is in working order but requires minor maintenance • Receival ramp, lairage and races are operational but require minor maintenance • Owner / operator / Butcher are cooperative but require additional training and supervision of correct practices. • Use of sharp knife of appropriate length
Level "D"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities are run down and require significant maintenance and upgrades