

Committee Secretary,
Senate Rural Affairs and Regional Transport Committee
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600.

SUBMISSION ON THE ANIMAL WELFARE BILL 2005.

Dear Committee Secretary,

I wish to make a submission re the above Animal Welfare Bill and commend its author, Senator Andrew Bartlett for his consistent and conscientious advocacy on behalf of all non-human animals.

My comments of necessity must be brief, as I do not wish to replicate the developed arguments submitted by professional advocates.

FACTORY FARMING OF PIGS, CHICKENS AND TURKEYS

The horrors of the various intensive animal systems are too well known to need more than noting here. I support the phasing out of these industries and their replacement by more humane methods of farming. There should be mandatory labeling that is both prominent and explicit to enable the customer to clearly understand the implications of the choices being made.

WILDLIFE (KANGAROOS)

I would like to see more attention given to issues relating to wildlife and free-living animals. In particular, I believe the kangaroo industry causes great suffering to its target animals. Shooting a female kangaroo with a joey at foot should be forbidden. . This should be classified as an act of egregious cruelty, the joey being either left to starve, or dispatched with one or more heavy blows to the head. The in-pouch joey suffers a similar fate. This is unacceptable.

SOCALLED FERAL ANIMALS

Introduced free-living animals eg., rabbits, foxes, wild dogs, goats, horses, and other species, currently enjoy no legal protection from acts of cruelty. This situation must be corrected. All animals, regardless of their status, are sentient beings, subject to pain and suffering, with lives of their own to lead, who should not be treated as “vermin” and killed by any available method, no matter how brutal. A strong regulatory regime is required to ensure that free-living animals are killed only as a last resort when all other (humane) means of control have been considered. The use of poisons such as 1080 should constitute an offence.

LIVE ANIMAL EXPORT TRADE

The gross animal suffering that is intrinsic to this industry should be sufficient to have it banned. The industry brings very little economic benefit to Australians and should be replaced by a chilled carcass trade. This would benefit the rural economy, providing much needed full-time rural work for males at present without work. It is a myth to argue that overseas Muslims demand fresh-killed animals. During the 1990s, when live exports from Australia to Saudi Arabia ceased, the chilled carcass trade boomed.

Australia currently exports live animals to non-Muslim countries in South America and The Philippines and other parts of Asia, where animal protection legislation is non-existent. I understand Australia has a thriving carcass trade with many of these countries. This trade should be expanded and the live export market phased out.

Overproduction of animals, leading to economic crisis must be managed by more humane means. The present system, which has been in place since the post-war years, was criticised by the 1985 Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare, who stated that, if assessed on welfare grounds alone, should be banned. The history of the trade is one of disasters, appalling cruelty and suffering.

COMPANION ANIMALS

Dogs and cats are held up as privileged species, protected under law in ways denied their non-domestic counterparts. For reasons I do not fully understand, the RSPCA, a community based organisation, appears to be very conservative, legalistic, and lacking in the will to respond to individual complaints about animal suffering except when a clearly defined offence is evident. Dogs for instance, often lead miserable lives devoid of any stimulation, fed infrequently, often provided with little or no shelter. Animal Welfare Inspectors should, in my opinion, take on an educative role in advising 'owners' of their ethical responsibilities towards the animals in their care. I have personal experience, having worked for several years as a volunteer, speaking to well-intentioned individuals attempting to improve the lot of a neglected animal, who are largely disappointed with the ineffectiveness of the RSPCA.

HORSE ABATTOIRS RACEHORSES AND JUMP RACING, BRUMBIES

Horses are intelligent, high-spirited, sensitive animals. Little is known about the manner in which horses are killed in Australia. They are often trucked very long distances before being killed and must then endure seeing other horses slaughtered as they wait their turn. We need a strong regulatory regime to ensure that there is well-designed equipment, trained employees, and a dedicated caring management to ensure horses suffer a minimum of discomfort. Live export of horses is unacceptable, given the length of the journey and the lack of appropriate protective legislation in the receiving countries.

Racehorses can begin life with a value of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Those who do not make the grade or are injured usually do not enjoy a happy fate. Unfortunately, the great majority of horses do not win or achieve a place. Those who fail to "shape up" inevitably 'ship out'. A high percentage are purchased, usually at auction, to be slaughtered at abattoirs or knackeries. An unknown number of young horses, surplus to requirements, never race, but are sold straight to the slaughterers. Despite improvements in recent years it appears that more thoroughbreds are being born than is really necessary.

The present system of shooting or trapping wild horses should be phased out. Fertility controls should be implemented. This requirement should be enshrined in law.

There are many other issues equally important which I hope will be dealt with by the committee.

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