Live Animal Export
[Request for information/FAQs]

Over 60 billion farm animals are reared for food every year worldwide. Most are transported for slaughter, often over long distances within and between countries, on unnecessary journeys taking days, weeks or even months. This massive movement of live animals means that at any given moment, more animals are travelling around the globe than people.

Transportation is completely unnatural for animals. Forms of suffering caused by transport include hunger, thirst, discomfort, pain, frustration, fear, disease and distress. Suffering increases directly with the length of journey endured. The issue of whether live long distance transport of animals, only to be slaughtered at the journey's end, is justified at all when they could be slaughtered on the farm, or at one of the nearest abattoirs, deserves much more attention.

- Tens of thousands of sheep routinely starve to death on ships from Australia, simply because they cannot recognise the concentrated feed pellets as food after a lifetime spent grazing grass.
- Laying hens frequently suffer the pain and discomfort of broken bones when removed from battery cages and placed into transport crates.
- Pig behaviour has demonstrated the distress that the noise and vibration of transport causes. Scientists found that pigs trained to push a switch in a noisy, vibrating transport simulator all learned to turn the simulator off, and soon kept the apparatus switched off for about 75% of the time.
- For cattle, the main causes of cattle death are heat stroke, trauma and respiratory disease (shipping fever). The high temperature load generated by the livestock and the ships' engines, combined with a high ambient temperature, makes heat stress a common problem on export vessels.

In 2008, HSI was part of a global initiative to bring an end to long distance transport of animals. A report was produced, Beyond Cruelty, Beyond Reason: Long distance transport and welfare of farm animals, to help bring to light conditions of live export around the world. Download PDF to learn more (1.8MB)

AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

The transport of animals to slaughter in Australia and New Zealand is complex, with differences in geography, animals, distances travelled, slaughter destinations, animal welfare guidelines, regulations, and people’s expectations.

There are two significant issues for animal welfare during transport in Australia. Some livestock face long transportation by road for slaughter, sometimes extremely long. Of particular concern is the transport of livestock from remote areas. These animals are unused to human contact and
handling, and may suffer more than usual from the stress of mustering and confinement for transport.

In Australia there are, as yet, no enforceable standards for the land transport of livestock for slaughter.

In addition, animals are also exported by sea from Australia for slaughter abroad, in a trade which shames many Australians otherwise proud of their country’s leading animal welfare record in other areas.

While public concern for animal welfare has grown in Australia, the Government has continuously supported the live export trade since its inception. A report commissioned by the Australian meat processing industry, Impact of the Live Animal Sector on the Australian Meat Processing Industry, concluded that the live export trade is also costing the country in terms of lost gross domestic product (GDP), lost household income, and lost Australian jobs. Furthermore, the report stated that profitability of the live export trade is supported by market distortions that are created by Government policies, and if it were not for these factors, the rising demand for meat in importing countries would have been met by exports of chilled and frozen meat.

HSI is completely opposed to the export of live sheep and cattle from Australia. With modern refrigeration methods there is no reason for animals not to be slaughtered in Australia and exported as frozen meat.

**CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS**

**Live export of Cattle**

_Update May 2011_ – Recently, Four Corners assisted Animals Australia deliver an explosive expose of the cruelty inflicted on Australian cattle exported to the slaughterhouses of Indonesia.

Over the past decade, Australia has exported 4.6 million cattle to Indonesia, Australia’s cattle export industries biggest trade partner. At the beginning of 2011, Animals Australia visited abattoirs in four Indonesian cities to document the treatment and slaughter of Australian cattle in Indonesian abattoirs, whilst RSPCA Australia conducted a scientific assessment of the investigation. Evidence showed horrific results, every slaughter facility breached international animal welfare guidelines; cattle subjected to torture such as eye gouging, kicking, tail twisting and breaking, leg breaking; and arduous and prolonged killings. Evidence from the investigation in Indonesia also showed that that Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and LiveCorp have directly contributed to the inhumane treatment of Australia cattle in Indonesia. **HSI supports the immediate ban of live trade to Indonesia and the announcement of an end date for live animal exports.**

You can help by asking the Government to immediately halt the live trade to Indonesia and confirm an end date for all live animal exports.

See below for a list of Government Ministers who you can write to about this issue.

**BACKGROUND**

- **Live Cattle Exports from Australia**

The last decade has seen a huge explosion in the number of live cattle exported from Australia, with over a million cattle annually suffering long sea voyages in order that they arrive alive to their overseas buyers. Most of the animals involved in live trade will be killed once they reach their
destination. The vast majority of these are sent to South East Asia, although some endure the long sea journey to the Middle East.

The suffering inherent in the live export trade was highlighted when in January 1999, 800 cattle suffocated on a ship en route from Darwin to Indonesia. The dead animals - about 80% of those on board the vessel bound for Irian Jaya - were thrown overboard. In 1996 the Guernsey Express sank killing 1,592 cattle. In 1998, 154 cattle and 283 goats died after a financial dispute delayed unloading of the Anomis in Malaysia. Also in 1998 346 head of cattle perished on the Charolais Express en route to the Middle East. Another 50 died while in port in Jordan and a further 174 injured or ill cattle were rejected on arrival in the Middle East. These animals were apparently killed and disposed of at sea on the return journey.

Further mass mortalities include in 1999, 829 cattle suffocated due to ventilation failure on the Temburong during a voyage from Darwin to Irian Jaya; in 1999, 300 cattle died of injuries when the Kalymnian Express met a cyclone on a trip from WA to Indonesia; in 2000, 99 cattle died when the NV Narvantes travelling from Darwin to Jakarta hit bad weather; in 2002, 200 cattle died due to transport delays on the NV Maysora on a trip from Australia to Israel; in 2002, 880 cattle and 1400 sheep died after the NV Becrux met extreme temperatures in the Arabian Gulf.

- **Sheep from Australia to the Middle East**

Every year, Australia exports over four million live sheep, over half a million cattle, and tens of thousands of goats to Asia and the Middle East, on grueling road and sea journeys that can last months. Tens of thousands die on the way.

On a single ship, up to 100,000 Australian sheep, raised on large isolated farms, are kept in crowded poorly lit pens, with three sheep per square metre for the entire journey. The main cause of death - apart from disasters like the Uniceb, which caught fire in 1996 - is failure to eat. On board ship the sheep are fed on dry pellets, and sheep who cannot adjust to this diet, may well starve during the journey. Others perish from heat stroke and a range of injuries and diseases including salmonellosis. To add, rarely are sick or injured animals euthanized, or even spotted in the densely crowded pens, their bodies only found at the journey's end. Yet 80% of Australian abattoirs are already Halal-certified, and Middle Eastern supermarkets are selling these chilled meat imports.

The number of sheep who die is, moreover, only the tip of the iceberg. Many others suffer terribly during the long journeys even though they survive. Even once the animals reach the Middle East their ordeal is still not over. Most will be ritually slaughtered - their throats will be cut while they are fully conscious and they will be left to bleed to death.

In 2002, 4 shipments of sheep recorded high mortality rates en route to the Middle East. Total deaths from these 4 shipments alone total 15,156 animals. In 2003 several thousand sheep have died on board the MV Cormo Express after a shipment of 57,000 sheep was rejected from several middle eastern ports.

- **Inadequacies in the implementation of the Animal Welfare Act for livestock in Western Australia's domestic and live export industry**

Recently, HSI wrote to the Western Australian government encouraging them to reinstate the Animal Welfare Unit (AWU) Inspectorate within the Department of Local Government to its former functional capacity so as to ensure effective and adequate policing of the Animal Welfare Act.

The government's decision to moderate the AWU by concluding five of the six AWU Inspectors' contracts is disappointing. The decision has resulted in a significant lack of monitoring and

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enforcement of the Act, and more importantly animal welfare standards, at Western Australian sale yards and ports.

Following evidence presented of several serious offences illustrating significant systemic problems in the regulatory system, the government decided to establish the AWU to effectively monitor conditions of livestock in domestic and live export chain. The AWU Inspectorate was extremely successful in its role and had fulfilled the commitment by the government to ensure that livestock welfare regulations were being enforced. They were sufficiently funded to provide a strong presence at every loading of a live export ship and saleyard, and conduct regular and routine inspections. Furthermore, they have successfully prosecuted breaches of the Act.

Unfortunately, since July 2009 the WCA Inspectorate has not been able, nor has had sufficient staff capacity, to conduct any inspections of live export at loading ports, saleyards or markets.

Recently, the Minister for Local Government, Minister Castrilli, stated that he held no concern for the decrease in funding and lack of supervision for welfare conditions within the live animal transport and export industries. The alternative proposed by Minister Castrilli has been a joint management agreement with the Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA).

The Department of Local Government claims to have appointed 200 general inspectors from local government authorities. However, it needs to be clarified that most of these either do not have the jurisdiction of the Act; do not have the power to prosecute; have a non-prosecutorial policy; do not involve themselves in livestock; or they lack sufficient knowledge, experience and resources to monitor or enforce the Act. Local government rangers can only act in an initial support capacity for the unit if they came across a breach of the Act. They are also limited further as the Act only permits them to act as an inspector within their local government area. As a result, local government authorities are advising the public that it is not within their capacity to attend to livestock welfare issues.

Without government inspectors, there is no way to guarantee that the industry is complying with the Animal Welfare Act and codes of practice.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO**

We can stop the unnecessary long distance transport of live animals for slaughter. Already modern exports of fresh chilled and frozen meat are far greater than the live trade and increasing every year. Governments can put legislation in place to make sure that animals are slaughtered, humanely and in accordance with cultural and religious requirements, as close to the point of production as possible. The chilled meat can then be transported and delivered in fresh condition.

If you would like to take action on this issue please write to the following Ministers and raise the following points.

- Ask the Government to immediately ban the live trade to Indonesia and confirm an end date for all live animal exports.

- Ask that the Government considers the terrible suffering of the animals involved in the live trade industry, and acts to outlaw live trade in light of the fact that modern refrigeration methods available.

- Highlight that slaughtering practices according to Islamic law, which were previously used as an excuse for the live export industry, have been accommodated by Australian abattoirs, and therefore removes the necessity to export live animals.
• Furthermore, processing the meat in Australia and exporting it frozen will not only benefit the livestock, but also increase the number of industry jobs at home.

The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP
Minister for Agriculture
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House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By Email: Barnaby.Joyce.MP@aph.gov.au

The Hon. Tony Abbott MP
Prime Minister
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The Hon. Andrew Robb MP
Minister for Trade
PO Box 6022
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By Email: Andrew.Robb.MP@aph.gov.au

If you are particularly concerned about the lack of monitoring and enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act in Western Australia, write to the Premier of WA:

• Encourage the government to reinstate an effective Animal Welfare Unit

• Particularly, ask them to consider the implications current management of animal welfare monitoring has on providing for welfare regulations set out by the Act, and reconsider establishing the AWU to its former sufficient capacities.

The Hon. Colin Barnett MEc MLA
Premier of Western Australia
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97 St Georges Terrace
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