

Live Animal Export is Unethical

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Live animal export is a story of corporate profiteering, politics, deceptive information and profound cruelty. It is also a story of division within society where the opponents of the trade are enduring and unyielding in their fight to end the prolonged horror metered out to the animals selected for export.

Simon Illingworth recently wrote in favour of the live export of bovine breeding stock, dairy cattle for milk production, and beef cattle for slaughter. He portrayed live export as an interesting and decent activity however concedes there are problems. This is a gross underestimation. It is one thing to simply try to foster debate on a subject in the St James Ethics Centre forum yet it is quite another to offer an authoritative opinion when uninformed of true facts, experience and substantiated research. Generally speaking it is deemed *unethical* to publically divulge opinions on serious matters when uninformed of true facts, particularly if one has a conflict of interest.

The St James Ethics Centre 'provides practical support to individuals and across organisations to help them to deal with the complex ethical questions that are part of everyday life'. If Simon Illingworth is one such individual then the following is provided to illustrate to him and others there is a very dark side to the live export trade. There is no ambiguity of the inherent cruelty of long hauls at sea and deplorable acts of inhumanity on foreign soil.

After viewing horrific footage of Australian domestic animals being tormented and sadistically butchered alive in Qatar, Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Kuwait, Mauritius and Indonesia it is now evident to most Australians that exporting live animals to these countries is unethical and

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supports further depravity. “You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you did not know” (Lyn White, 16/06/2011).



Sadistic slaughter following starvation and neglect

Live animal export is reported to be 0.03% of total exports from Australia (2012). The importance of exporting live animals could hence be considered not that important to our economy especially when evidence exists that the alternative option of processing meat at the closest point of production would be more productive in terms of monetary return and employment. It is a myth to suggest banning cattle export would destroy the beef industry. Australians do not owe the rest of the over populated world sustenance in the form of live animals to be sadistically slaughtered after being tormented to the extreme. Australia is a reliable and trustworthy trading partner however the recipients of our live animals repeatably fail to respect our animal welfare standards. Once the animals depart the wharf there is no guarantee of safe passage and the persons receiving live animals will be benevolent and all animals stunned before slaughter. Australian boxed meat has a shelf life of 4 months and is the most efficient means of sending

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meat overseas. In those countries where refrigeration is an issue, those without usually cannot afford to eat red meat anyway. Without refrigeration, slain animals need to be consumed as soon as possible, or salted down for preservation. Most cargo vessels already lift frozen products either in their own refrigerated rooms or on or below deck in refrigerated containers.

Meat importers in the United Kingdom have said they will take as much frozen boxed meat that Australia can provide and even that would not be enough.



Discharging and loading cargo

Animal welfare has been researched for many years and slaughter without stunning is highly controversial. Welfare issues are far greater for cattle

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than sheep as they take longer to lose consciousness after having both carotid arteries severed. In cattle the anatomy of the brain is somewhat different in that they have vertebral arteries that are usually not severed by the slaughter technique (Kosher or Halal). These vertebral arteries continue to supply the brain with oxygenated blood. That is, when the carotid arteries are severed during slaughter the brain still has a blood supply. Professor Temple Grandin from Colorado State University concluded cattle take a longer period of time to become insensible. “The time to loss of insensibility when good cutting technique is used will range from 17 sec to 85 sec (Blackmore 1984, Blackmore et al 1983, Gregory and Wotton 1984, Grandin 2010, Daly et al 1988, Gregory et al 2010). Some cattle may have prolonged periods of sensibility lasting up to 385 seconds (Blackmore, 1984).....”

One would expect dairy cows and breeding stock to have some level of “protection” commensurate with their value however sadly this is not usually the case. Numerous cases have been recorded of sheep and cattle dying of neglect in the Middle East and elsewhere. On 18th September 2012 the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported one typical occurrence where high value Victorian dairy cattle were sent to Qatar. An Australian veterinary technician (AVT) was invited to inspect the farm and found a lack of infrastructure to support the thousands of sheep, goats and cattle coming from Australia. The AVT agreed to stay on as a consultant to remedy the problems on the farm and subsequently returned to Australia for a 10 days break. Upon her revisit to the Qatar farm she discovered the animals hadn't been fed whilst she was away and were dying in 50°C heat. 10,000 sheep had been exported to the Qatar farm in February 2012 and 7,000 sheep had perished from lack of feed, water, and heat stroke (failed thermoregulation). The farmer of the dairy cows (vendor) became informed as to her animals' fate and pledged she “will never export cattle ever again”.

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Old converted bulk carrier

Simon Illingworth's comments on the carriage of livestock do not appear to be based on personal experience. He wrote, "The boats used for cattle export today are fitted with extraction fans, food, veterinary assistance and pens that satisfactorily house the cattle. This may not have been the case years ago but improvements have been made to the live export boats". Blowers and extraction fans have always been part of a ship structure. Of course there should be feed and water however a veterinary surgeon is not always on board. Stocking density has always been an issue and the pens structure, including flooring, and size is not always satisfactory.

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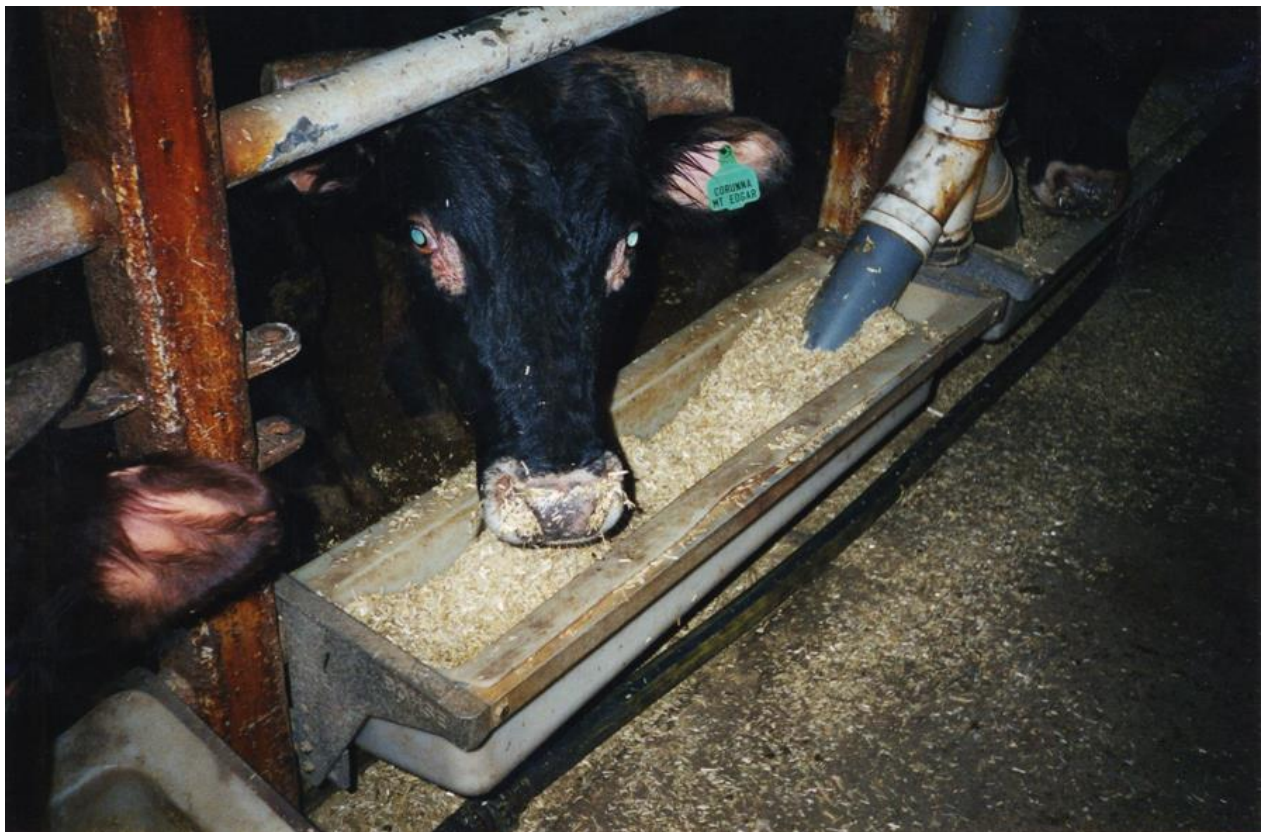
Extreme fear, unpreventable disease (multi-system failure and subsequent death) and suffering are synonymous with 'long hauls' at sea

There is a marked difference between vessels undertaking *short hauls* to ports close to Australia, such as in Indonesia, as opposed to *long hauls* to the Middle East, Russia and Africa. He appears to have little or no knowledge of conditions on long hauls where the majority of ships commissioned to transport Australian animals are old former oil tankers, bulk carriers, container ships and vehicle transporters. Most are 30 years old or more. Many have had their names changed to conceal a poor history. No livestock ships are registered in Australia but are flagged out to other countries such as Singapore and Panama. All operate with foreign crew and none carry Australians apart from an Australian Government accredited veterinarian (AAV) (when carried), a head stockman, and very rarely an Australian master. Some ships do, however, have Australian names such as the Wellard owned vessels "Ocean Swagman" and "Ocean Drover" (previously MV "Becrux") that are registered in Singapore. Machinery breakdowns do occur and will continue to occur despite backup systems. Ventilation and adequate air changes, and many other aspects of the whole seagoing operation are always at risk of becoming compromised. In many

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instances the ventilation is grossly inadequate and heat stress is an ongoing issue in equatorial zones.

Animal based indicators and clinical evidence of disease obtained from veterinary examination, such as excessive panting, coughing, cleanliness, lameness, demeanour, injuries, skin lesions, nasal discharge, and diarrhoea provide reliable signs that the welfare of the animals on board a ship are severely impaired. Indicators and clinical signs of this nature, and death, are common place on long hauls.



Evidence of extremely poor animal welfare

The author has served on a variety of merchant ships, including dedicated livestock ships, carrying horses, cattle, and sheep on 'short hauls' and 'long hauls' (> 10 days). Notwithstanding the improvements in ship design, improved technology, scientific and practical knowledge, unpreventable *morbidity* and *mortality* will always occur. The mortality rates will vary from what are considered within normal limits to excessive. Proponents of the trade argue that low death rates are an indicator of trifling cruelty. For

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example, because only 0.44% of the sheep die out of 65,000 sheep then that represents very little cruelty having occurred. This, of course, is an incorrect assumption or fallacy.



One of 650 diseased cattle mid Indian Ocean bound for Saudi Arabia

The Veterinary services provided to export animals have too frequently been sub-optimal and not at a standard acceptable elsewhere in the wider community. Photographic evidence is available to demonstrate repeat violations of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Table A3.1.2 ASEL) in that veterinary inspections have failed to detect and reject animals according to this code (ASEL). Examples of this include: failure to detect at pre-selection and final inspection cases of excessive weights of cattle, fly blown dehorned cattle, excessive wool, and salmonella infected carriers, cases of keratoconjunctivitis, scabby mouth, advanced pregnancies, hernias, foot rot, and inanition (failure to eat). Relying only on visual inspections to detect 'diseased' animals seems ineffective. We know sheep carrying salmonella, whilst not showing evidence of disease, walk on

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the ships undetected. In addition, there have also been cases where sheep with severe diarrhoea have been loaded. Laboratory testing (bacterial culture, ELISA, PCR, etc.) is not routinely carried out because many mobs of sheep may show up positive to salmonella spp. Extreme fear, heat stress, unpreventable disease, injury, brutality and agonising death, all take place at some stage throughout 'long hauls' at sea.



An Australian sheep two weeks out of Fremantle bound for the Middle East

Australian society expects their veterinarians to look out for the welfare of all animals and it is enshrined in some states legislation to do so. NSW veterinarians now have to declare they will promote the welfare of animals under the Veterinary Practice Act 2003. Unfortunately veterinarians on-board the live export ships are not independent. They are employed by the exporter. In 2011 there were 121 listed AQIS accredited veterinarians and only 7 did three or more voyages. Whilst veterinarians are being selectively

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chosen and paid by the exporters there will be a serious conflict of interest. Independent veterinarians employed by DAFF Biosecurity (AQIS) have been recommended repeatedly but resisted in the industry. Many on-board vets have had their employment terminated because they have submitted disapproving voyage reports. Verification is available to demonstrate AAV's (employed by the exporters) and AQIS veterinarians have repeatedly breached Table A3.1.2 ASEL in that they have failed on many occasions to comply with rejection criteria.

Conducting review after review is not going to improve animal welfare when ongoing calamities of the trade are unpreventable and successful prosecutions for breaches of state government Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (POCTA) legislation and the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) have not occurred. As time goes by, it becomes more evident that any investigation undertaken by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is tainted by the fact that DAFF both promotes and investigates the trade therefore by law their findings would be invalid. It follows then that these continuing reviews amount to being a sham. The industry has been beleaguered by ongoing disasters year after year since the late 1970's notwithstanding successive Governments, pertinent primary and sub-ordinate legislation, veterinary research, enhanced shipping technology, numerous reviews, numerous reports and the development of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL). An Order under the Australian Meat and Livestock Industry Act 1997 refers to ASEL however there exists a divergence of opinions as to whether these standards are actually enforceable.

As it stands at the moment, the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) requires a veterinary surgeon to accompany animals on voyages > 10 days, and on 10% of other randomly chosen voyages (these would be the 'short hauls'). This recommendation by the Keniry Review means a veterinarian is not on all ships exporting live animals. AQIS may also place a veterinarian on any voyage it deems fit and I assume this decision would be in accordance with the exporter's risk assessment. Decisions to mitigate

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risk should be based on scientific, ethical, and practical merit and not influenced by economics particularly where the welfare of the animals is at stake.



Veterinary surgeon performing daily autopsies

When you consider the high risks to animals on the ships it is difficult to accept that the treatments offered to mitigate some of these risks are entirely genuine. For example, to expect one veterinarian to thoroughly look after say, 120,000 sheep or even 65,000 sheep plus 650 cattle 24hrs a day X 7days a week for 3 weeks is an impossible task. An AAV's role is to make reports, perform autopsies, diagnose disease, and attempt treatments.

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Sheep so sick they will not receive an adequate dose of antibiotic

Since Australia is a signatory of the World Organization of Animal Health (OIE) then full compliance with the Terrestrial Animal Health Code should be a priority. Poor veterinary services, incorrect recording, falsifying biostatistics, poor animal husbandry practices including working animals in extreme heat, the use of electric goads and inattentiveness to density when loading and transporting, all amount to poor governance and disregard for the animal welfare. Having exposed inconsistency and inaccuracy, reliance on any biostatistics offered by export companies, DAFF/AQIS, MLA and LiveCorp must be viewed with caution.

Stress is a major factor in live export trade. It is accepted in the scientific forum that extremely stressed animals are more likely to submit to disease processes such as the Salmonellosis/Enteritis Complex.

In the wake of the Four Corners expose in 2011 it became evident Australian Livestock Export Corporation (LiveCorp), Meat and Livestock

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Australia (MLA), and the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) disgraced themselves by not reviewing performance more thoroughly and initiating corrective action when required, long ago. In a letter to members published on the MLA website, Chairman of the day Don Heatley wrote: "A decade's worth of industry and government representatives, plus independent animal welfare experts had not seen such cruelty - or something would have been done." It is difficult to believe MLA, LiveCorp Board, and members of AQIS did not know what fate awaited these animals. The marketing manager of Wellard Rural Export admits he knew. It appears so many people have failed dismally in their responsibilities to guarantee our export trade.

The marketing manager for Wellard at this time claimed to have personally sold more than 1.5 million head of cattle into Indonesia since 1991. He divulged the largest privately owned abattoir in Jakarta killed 4,000 to 6,000 cattle a month and was "working on getting a stun system in place". If the estimated figures quoted are correct then approximately 72,000 cattle were killed yearly without stunning at this abattoir. Another independent source reported 450,000 Australian cattle were killed without stunning in Indonesia. The marketing manager said "I have watched literally thousands of cattle slaughtered in the boxes in Indonesia. Yes, there are problems but 98% of the cattle I watched killed was quick and without fuss". If this account is to be believed, 2% of 72,000 head of cattle equals 1,440 cattle that, one must assume, were brutalized in a similar manner as seen on Four Corners at just that single abattoir. The manager admitted the eight or nine other crews that slaughtered cattle at the same abattoir nightly had even lower standards. Simon Illingworth wrote "A handful of rogue slaughtermen captured on film should not have stopped a billion dollar industry that supplies food". Attempting to justify and reduce the enormity of their actions by equating to dollars is contemptible.

Large amounts of money have been granted to recipients of Australian livestock so as to educate them in matters of animal husbandry and animal welfare. Egyptian abattoirs were granted large amounts of money by a

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humanitarian institute in order to stop the insane brutality when slaughtering livestock however on subsequent inspection nothing had changed (Philip Wollen AOM, 2013).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is the officially recognised Australian government agency that collects and publishes statistical information about Australia and its people. In 2011 -12 the value of Australia's total agriculture was *\$46.7 billion*. In recent times, the agricultural commodities with the highest value of production by Australian farmers have been cattle and calf slaughterings, followed by wheat, milk, vegetables, fruit and nuts, sheep and lamb slaughterings, and wool. In 2012-13 Australia exported 67% of its total beef and veal production to more than 100 countries. The value of total beef and veal exports in 2012-13 was *\$5.06 billion*. The beef industry contributes 13% to total Australian farm exports. The value of Australia's live cattle exports in 2012-13 was *\$590 million*. Live cattle export hence only amounts to approximately 1.26% of the total value of agricultural. It may not be far from the truth to accept live export amounts to only 5% of the whole livestock industry, and of this about 3% would be sheep and goats on long hauls (> 10 days) to the Middle Eastern and African countries.

Farmers are the key players in live animal export. It is farmers who need convincing there are equally profitable and more humane alternatives domestically. Financial reasons should not constitute justification for the inherent cruelty of long hauls at sea and deplorable acts of inhumanity in foreign countries, however faced with indoctrination about financial hardship that trade cessation will cause, farmers are left confused with tough choices when agents, exporters, Meat and Livestock Australia, shipping companies, importers and overseas processors (who, at times, are the same entity. Example: Wellard) all push their own agendas, and encourage them to keep producing animals for trade. These corporations paint a grim picture of the farmers' future without it, despite independent economic analysis that suggest otherwise. There are still farmers who will not be discouraged from sending more of their animals to these locations.

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Farmers do have a choice at sale yards by stipulating the sale of their animals is for “meat only”.

Compliance with the Commonwealth Government new system of tracing animals from farm gate to slaughter (Export Supply Chain Assurance Scheme (ESCAS)) has also failed miserably and will continue to fail as Australia cannot possibly regulate conditions worldwide. One of the exporters stated it was too ambitious and another, when faced with sheep being hurled and booted out of the ship in Israel recently, stated it was very difficult to control the situation at the end destination.

Like farmers, a number of veterinarians also play a pivotal role in the live trade and as the farmers are becoming divided so is the veterinary profession. A difference of opinion has evolved between those for and those against. As a consequence to the utter failure of successive Commonwealth Governments to protect the welfare of animals throughout the live export chain, a growing number of veterinarians have registered their opposition to live export by forming an association called Vets Against Live Export Inc. (VALE). VALE acts as a repository of information about the live export industry and associated animal health issues. The association specifically aims to focus on veterinary and scientific concerns and expose corrupt practices in live export. VALE also endeavours to raise public awareness and provide objective information to the public and veterinary profession on issues relevant to the live export of farm animals hoping ultimately to influence and change government policies relating to live export.

This manuscript is not intended to be about politics but about the millions of innocent animals sent by Australian farmers on long haul sea transport vessels to recipients that practice ongoing sadistic acts of cruelty. The policy of exporting animals live should cease immediately and this should be non- negotiable.

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Veterinarian Oath

I solemnly swear to practise veterinary science ethically and conscientiously for the benefit of animal welfare, animal and human health, users of veterinary services and the community.

I will endeavour to maintain my practice of veterinary science to current professional standards and will strive to improve my skills and knowledge through continuing professional development.

I acknowledge that along with the privilege of acceptance into the veterinary profession comes community and professional responsibility.

I will maintain these principles throughout my professional life.

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Biography



Peter is a graduate of the University of Queensland Veterinary School and the Australian Maritime College (University of Tasmania). Probably the only veterinary surgeon to ever become a full captain / master mariner (unlimited ship size and area of operation) in the Merchant Navy, Peter has spent a life at sea, under the sea, and caring for animals. He has had command on numerous vessels to 50,000 tonne, worked as a commercial diver to 60m depth and yet always found the time to practice veterinary medicine and surgery when ashore. Peter's wide-ranging education and experience permits him to view the Middle East - African live export trade from a different perspective

