

7/6 - not in Union  
- spoke to JM.

7 June 2011

Senator Joe Ludwig  
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

I write on behalf of RSPCA Australia and Animals Australia.

Thank you for meeting with us yesterday. To reiterate, we are extremely disappointed with the inadequate response of the Government to the evidence provided from Indonesia. Not one Australian animal has had its welfare protected through the announcements of the Government to date.

We repeat that the only acceptable action is an immediate halt to the trade to Indonesia as no lesser action will serve to protect the interests of cattle currently destined for export to that country. The government is now aware that all Indonesian slaughterhouses that use Mark 1 boxes breach the most basic animal welfare guidelines issued by the World Animal Health Organisation (OIE). The use of these devices was condemned by Professor Temple Grandin, the world's leading slaughter expert and is clearly not acceptable to the Australian community. Similarly traditional roping slaughter which is occurring in facilities without boxes is equally unacceptable. In both methods of slaughter, cattle are routinely subjected to tail breaking, eye-gouging and other painful techniques to move them into position for slaughter.

The treatment of Australian cattle witnessed during the Animals Australia investigation is representative of practices in Indonesia. Around 90% of all Australian cattle go through facilities that do not meet the most basic animal welfare guidelines. MLA/LiveCorp's own report on visits to 10 abattoirs (in March 2010) documented slaughter practices that included head slapping, multiple knife cuts, tail twisting and eye gouging. Four Corners went to two additional facilities not visited by Animals Australia and they witnessed the same treatment. For the industry to suggest that these are rogue facilities and that they haven't witnessed such treatment is a failed attempt at damage control that is rightfully being disbelieved by the media and the public. It is MLA that is responsible for installing 103 Mark 1 boxes in slaughterhouses throughout Indonesia that serve to facilitate this cruel treatment. Nine of the eleven facilities visited by Animals Australia had boxes installed by MLA.

As previously conveyed, the implementation of Export Control Orders that relate to 12 Indonesian abattoirs will in no way serve to protect the welfare of Australian cattle. There is no traceability within the supply chain and, even if animals could be prevented from being supplied to these abattoirs, they would simply be slaughtered at a neighbouring facility where they will be subjected to equally brutal treatment.

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Similarly, the proposal put to you yesterday by MLA will not in any way address the current welfare issues in Indonesia, nor will it for a moment be deemed acceptable by an outraged community calling for the government to act in the interests of Australian livestock, rather than in the interests of an industry that has proven time and time again to government that it cannot be trusted.

To summarise the problems with the proposal put to you by MLA of sending animals to 25 facilities:

- It offers no protection to Australian cattle in Indonesia currently or in the foreseeable future.
- Meeting OIE standards is not an acceptable benchmark. The industry is trying once again to mislead government and producers by presenting OIE standards as international standards. They are basic minimum benchmarks intended to prevent the worst cruelties in countries where there is no animal protection legislation, and OIE standards do not incorporate stunning. The Australian public will not accept slaughter of a fully conscious animal having seen the vision of this occurring on Four Corners.
- At least 20 of those facilities will be operating with Mark 1 boxes which breach international guidelines and have been condemned as violating every humane principle anywhere in the world by Professor Temple Grandin. These boxes are facilitating traditional Indonesian roping slaughter which causes extreme distress and suffering. These Mark 1 boxes do not physically restrain the animal and therefore cannot incorporate stunning.
- There are only 4 abattoirs in Indonesia that we are aware of that have the capacity to restrain and stun Australian cattle. We know nothing about the animal handling standards that these abattoirs meet or whether they are subject to the rigorous auditing process required in Australia to ensure the welfare of animals.
- There is no 'accreditation' program in Indonesia. To use this word in reference to any livestock handling or slaughter processing in Indonesia is misleading to say the least.
- It would be extremely difficult to establish a traceability system in Indonesia that could not be circumvented and is acceptable to Indonesian merchants who have a preference to take animals to local slaughterhouses and markets.

Once again, the industry is seeking to mislead the government to maintain its support, and in this case to also attempt to appease angry MLA members. The government has already suffering the embarrassment of investing \$1.2 million of tax-payer funding in devices that have been condemned as inhumane. Were it to again trust this industry along a pathway that would inevitably be exposed as flawed and subjecting animals again to brutal treatment, it is highly likely that it would impact on public support for the Gillard government - and both Animals Australia and RSPCA Australia would not hesitate to highlight that our concerns and advice were once again ignored.

As you were informed today by Tom Maguire of the Australian Meat Industry Council, the failure of the government to appropriately address the situation in Indonesia means that the community is losing confidence in the domestic livestock industry and it is also impacting on our international reputation in key export markets. The only option the Government has available to it is to immediately halt the live trade to Indonesia in the interests of the whole Australian meat and cattle industry.



for all creatures **great & small**

While there is a focus on the future of the live export trade to Indonesia, we can't forget that there are tens of thousands of cattle already in Indonesian feedlots or on ships destined for Indonesia. In an attempt to afford these cattle some protection, we request the Government act urgently and send officers to every facility slaughtering Australian cattle.

We again appeal to the Government to show leadership on this issue and immediately call a halt to further exports to Indonesia.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Neil". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heather Neil  
CEO  
RSPCA Australia