



6 March 2013

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Rebecca Irwin
First Assistant Secretary
Live Animal Export Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
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Dear Ms Irwin

Submission by AAV Dr Lynn Simpson revealing breaches of the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock*

I write on behalf of Vets Against Live Export (“VALE”).

I refer to the submission (“**the Submission**”) recently posted on the website of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (“DAFF”) in relation to the ongoing review of the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock* (“ASEL”).¹ As you are aware, Dr Simpson is well known in the live export industry, having been involved in the industry for over 13 years and having been the AQIS Accredited Veterinarian (“AAV”) on 57 long and extra-long haul voyages.

VALE has long been concerned that there are ongoing, recurrent and systemic problems on live export voyages, resulting in poor welfare for animals exported on the voyages. However, it has always been impossible to get a true picture of these issues, as AAVs are chosen and paid for by exporters. There have, however been exceptions, such as the depiction of the voyage of the *Al Khaleej* by vet Dr Tony Hill in 2003 (prior to the *Cormo Express* disaster).

In this regard, the Submission is truly unprecedented, as it gives an insight into the real conditions on live export voyages, from the standpoint of an experienced AAV. The major problem is summarised by Dr Simpson in paragraph 3 of the Submission:

¹ http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/export-trade/submission_to_the_review_of_australian_standards_for_the_export_of_livestock_and_the_livestock_export_standards_advisory_group

“Export...is being done primarily to commercial advantage and not in general prioritising the well being and health of the animals loaded onto vessels.”

The Submission documents many observations that indicate to VALE there is good evidence of breaches of ASEL. VALE requests that you take further evidence from Dr Simpson and instigate investigations into these possible breaches, taking action against responsible live exporters where necessary.

The apparent breaches we have identified are:

1. On page 6 the Submission depicts a bull with a severe scrotal hernia, which Dr Simpson strongly implies was in that condition when loaded.

This appears to be a breach of:

ASEL 1.27:

Livestock sourced for export that become sick or injured during on-farm preparation must be excluded from export, and arrangements must be made for their prompt and humane handling and care.

ASEL 4.8

To ensure that only fit and healthy livestock are transported and are loaded on board:

- (a) the exporter must arrange for the livestock to be inspected for health and welfare and fitness to travel, immediately before they are loaded onto the vessel;*
- (b) only livestock that are healthy and fit to travel can be loaded;*

ASEL 5.7

Any livestock identified as being sick or injured must:

- (a) be given prompt treatment;*
- (b) be transferred to a hospital pen, if required; and*
- (c) if necessary, be euthanased humanely and without delay*

In our view, this animal should have been euthanased.

2. On page 6, Dr Simpson comments that “Incidents of highly visibly rejectable animals that are loaded onto vessels are very common. Mostly this includes ringworm, lameness, pinkeye, overweight/oversize animals, shy feeders and animals with existing respiratory or gastrointestinal disease”.

This would indicate breaches of ASEL 3.1.1 (cattle and buffalo) and ASEL 3.1.2 (sheep and goats) in which such conditions are listed as rejection criteria:

ASEL 3.1.1:

Cattle or buffalo found with any of the signs shown in Table A3.1.1 must be rejected from the proposed export consignment. Any other condition that could be defined as an infectious or contagious disease, or would mean that the animal’s health or welfare would decline or that the animal would suffer significant distress during transport, also requires the animal’s rejection from export.

ASEL 3.1.2

Sheep or goats found with any of the signs show in Table A3.1.2 must be rejected from the proposed export consignment. Any other condition that could be defined as an infectious or contagious disease, or would mean that the animal's health or welfare would decline or that the animal would suffer significant distress during transport, also requires the animal's rejection from export.

It would also confirm the documented observations by VALE at Fremantle Port that animals with many of these conditions are routinely transported to port from the feedlots thus likely to be loaded: rejection numbers usually seem relatively low compared to numbers of affected animals noted on trucks.

3. On page 7, the Submission has a photograph of a bull reportedly "well in excess of 700kg", which in Dr Simpson's opinion "should never have been loaded." She says the animal "ground down his toes, knees, fetlocks and carpus joints, refused to stand again and was euthanized on humane grounds."

This appears to be a breach of ASEL 1.9:

Cattle and buffalo sourced for export as slaughter and feeder animals:
(a) *must have been weaned at least 14 days before sourcing for export;*
(b) *must have an individual liveweight of more than 200 kg and less than 650 kg or, if outside these weights, have written prior approval from the relevant Australian Government agency;*

Furthermore, this raises the question whether such an animal was mentioned in any travel and loading plans or other documents required under the *Export Control (Animals) Order 2004*, if so, how that animal could be shipped, and if not, whether the exporter made any false declarations relating to the animal.

4. On page 12 and 13, Dr Simpson reports birthing at sea in cattle, sheep and goats.

On page 13, she states that "some voyages had high lambing numbers, approaching 100."

The description in the Submission appears to evidence breaches of:

ASEL 1.11:

Ewes with a weight of 40 kg or more and all does (goats) must only be sourced for export as slaughter and feeder animals if they have been pregnancy tested by ultrasound within 30 days of export and certified not to be pregnant, by written declaration, by a person able to demonstrate a suitable level of experience and skill.

Likewise on pages 12 and 13, Dr Simpson alludes to cattle giving birth on live export ships.

This appears to be in breach of:

ASEL 1.9

Cattle and buffalo sourced for export as slaughter and feeder animals:

(a) must have been determined not to be pregnant, using the following criteria:

- (i) have been pregnancy tested during the 30 day period before export and certified in writing as not detectably pregnant by the registered veterinarian or competent pregnancy tester who pregnancy tested the cattle or buffalo; or*
- (ii) be accompanied by a vendor declaration that certifies that they have been spayed using the Willis dropped ovary technique not less than 30 days before export; or*
- (iii) be accompanied by a vendor declaration that certifies that they have been spayed not less than 280 days before export.*

Onboard birthing is a recurring theme in mortality investigation reports published by DAFF, and it appears pregnant animals are routinely allowed on board live export ships and routinely give birth. We are not aware of any actions taken by DAFF to penalise exporters who allow this to happen.

5. At page 14, Dr Simpson states that “dehorning wounds often come on board flyblown” and at page 13, she suggests a change in rejection criteria to specifically include “unhealed wounds from recent surgical procedures such as dehorning”.

Whilst clearer specification is to be encouraged, flyblown wounds would appear to be in breach of:

ASEL 3.1.1:

*Cattle or buffalo found with any of the signs shown in Table A3.1.1 must be rejected from the proposed export consignment. Any other condition that could be defined as an infectious or contagious disease, **or would mean that the animal's health or welfare would decline or that the animal would suffer significant distress during transport**, also requires the animal's rejection from export*

6. At page 18, Dr Simpson strongly implies that there are “curfews” restricting access to water at the end of voyages.

This appears to be in breach of:

ASEL 5.5:

(b) Adequate feed and water must be supplied to livestock waiting to be discharged, and during the discharge period.

7. At page 18, Dr Simpson highlights the ASEL requirements for provision of bedding.

Numerous photos supplied appear to be in breach of:

ASEL 4.15:

Bedding must be provided in accordance with specifications in Appendix 4.3

ASEL 4.3.1

Cattle and buffalo exported on voyages of 10 days or more must be provided with sawdust, rice hulls or similar material to be used exclusively for bedding at a rate of at least 7 t or 25 m³ for every 1000 m² of cattle pen space.

Twenty five cubic metres of bedding per 1000 square metres of pen space equates to a bedding depth of 25mm.

In addition, numerous photographs throughout the document (pp 3,6,7,9,10 and 17) appear to be in breach of:

ASEL 5.9:

When bedding is used it must be maintained in adequate condition to ensure the health and welfare of livestock

I look forward to hearing further from you regarding your proposed actions.

Yours sincerely



Dr Susan Foster, BVSc MVetClinStud FANZCVS
Spokesperson