

31 July 2013



UPDATE

DAFF report into Pakistan fiasco raises more questions than it answers

The *Ocean Drover* left Fremantle on 4 August 2012 for ports in the Middle East including Oman, Qatar and Bahrain. After offloading sheep at Oman and Qatar, *Ocean Drover* arrived at Bahrain on 22 August 2012. Authorities there rejected the shipment of 22,000 sheep on the grounds that scabby mouth had been identified among the sheep.

Almost immediately the exporter, Wellard, sought an alternative importer. Exporters are required to have a contingency plan in the event of rejection of a shipment.¹ Although DAFF later reported that Wellard did have a contingency plan at the time of rejection, the wording raises questions:

“... canvassing a number of options with the Department, including Pakistan”.

Pakistan issued an import permit on 24 August before the sheep were finally rejected by Bahrain. It then appears that Wellard provided [“first information regarding Pakistan supply chain to DAFF”](#) on that date. DAFF agreed to Wellard’s re-routing the *Ocean Drover* to Pakistan but neither the Australian Government nor Wellard informed Pakistan of the Bahrain rejection. DAFF issued a health report dated 1 September 2012 indicating that the sheep were not diseased but a Pakistan inquiry into the matter expressed concern about the certificate.

Once in Pakistan, the animals were ordered to be slaughtered on the grounds that they were infected. The brutal cull started on 16 September, was halted on 22 September and then recommenced on October 19 until all sheep were killed. The slaughter was cruel in the extreme, as highlighted in Four Corners’ “Another Bloody Business”.

Spokesperson for VALE Dr Sue Foster says the investigation has been a complete whitewash that answers none of the critical questions about this most serious animal welfare disaster.

“We don't know how many sheep were rejected at Fremantle Port with the disease thus do not know whether there was a higher than usual load-out prevalence for scabby mouth for this shipment. We also don't know if sheep with scabby mouth were present at unloading in Bahrain and if so, how many. In addition, Australia’s MOU with Bahrain (and others) says that if the importer suspects disease problems then the animals are to be quarantined. Why was the MOU ignored?”

¹ Export Control (Animals) Order (2005)

“We also don't know on what date Pakistan was proposed as a contingency. If Wellard made such a declaration nominating Pakistan prior to 4 August 2012, why was Pakistan considered as an alternative destination, when it was not ESCAS approved?”

“In addition, the report does not address the issue of scabby mouth as a precipitating cause of yet another animal welfare disaster. Scabby mouth is endemic in Australian sheep flocks and it is known that while it is a rejection criteria for live export, it will be present at some level in all shipments. Vaccination does not necessarily prevent the disease but usually lessens the severity of clinical disease should sheep become infected during feedlotting or onboard. Vaccination is required for shipments to Saudi Arabia, why not other Middle Eastern destinations? Would vaccination reduce the clinical disease at the end destination to an extent that shipments would not be rejected?”

In the end, this investigation gave us little except a carefully worded chronology of events and the exoneration of an exporter despite being one of the worst live export disasters in recent history.

ENDS

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