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MEDIA RELEASE

VALE finds holes in ESCAS report

The Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System report is very positive about the impact ESCAS is having on animal welfare in countries that import Australian animals. However, VALE questions the accuracy and interpretation of the report as well as inconsistencies with the Department of Agriculture's website.

The report, which consistently refers to 'world welfare standards' glosses over the fact that these standards (OIE recommendations) are merely a set of guidelines that may be achievable in third world countries.

The non-compliance figures themselves appear discrepant. For example, Table C3 doesn't match with Table C1 and the figures in the 'instances' column don't add up in Table C3. Of more concern, the report states that up to 30 November 2014 there were only 59 incidents of non-compliance, of which 47% (28) were detected by the Department of Agriculture, 31% (18) self reported by exporters and 22% (13) reported by other. Thirty-seven of these incidents were reported to have no direct adverse animal welfare impact

However, these numbers are at odds with the Department's own website of 47 regulatory compliance investigations, of which 41 are related to ESCAS. Of the 41 ESCAS incident reports only 23 investigations are listed as complete at 30 November 2014. Of the 23 completed reports, 19 have been confirmed as non-compliant (3 self-reported, 16 by independent parties), 17 of which (1 self reported, 16 by independents) have had direct or potential adverse animal welfare outcomes. These figures obviously differ from those on the summary page of the ESCAS report.

It is also clear that these figures have been presented to provide a favourable impression. Adverse welfare outcomes were identified in 70% of the complaints by independent parties and 74% of the total reported incidents. The department's own non-compliance issues were obviously trivial issues and, critically, must have all been judged to have no animal welfare outcomes. Presumably, there would have been an even higher level of detection of adverse outcomes if had there been further 'independent' monitoring.

Of extreme concern, the exporter-reported brutal slaughter of an entire consignment of 22,000 sheep in Pakistan was not classified as non-compliance even though it was a clear ESCAS failure.

VALE spokesperson Dr Sue Foster commented, “To omit 22,000 sheep which died in an appalling manner from the tally of animals associated with non-compliance is either dishonest or conveniently ignoring the suffering of a substantial number of animals. The exclusion of the Pakistan tally, the incorrect report numbers and percentages, the cursory consideration of the seriousness of the non-compliance reports and the fact that nearly every independent complaint was verified, all indicate that the report is an attempt to downplay the inadequacies of the whole ESCAS system including its review.

“The Department of Agriculture both promotes and regulates the live export trade. Given the foreword by Minister Joyce, the misleading description of ‘world welfare standards’, the misrepresentation and incorrect numbers in the report and the failure of the department to impose any penalties for non-compliance, the main focus is clearly promotion rather than regulation,” she said.

(Appendix attached).

APPENDIX 1: ANALYSIS OF PROVIDED NUMBERS

Regulatory compliance investigations

Webpage: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/export/live-animals/livestock/regulatory-framework/compliance-investigations/investigations-regulatory-compliance>

46 reports but note that Report 11 is in 2 parts, 11a and 11b so 47 incidents

- ESCAS reports 40 (if 11a and b are regarded as 1) but 41 incidents
- Non ESCAS reports 6

Of the 41 ESCAS incident reports:

- 16 were from exporters
- 25 were from independent parties

Of these, 28 are complete

- ESCAS 23
- Non ESCAS 5

Summary 23 ESCAS incidents reported have been assessed/completed:

Of these:

- 16 independently reported have been confirmed as non-compliance (website and Appendix C) with adverse animal welfare outcome = 70%
- 3 self reported confirmed as non-compliance but only 1 critical

Thus of the 23 ESCAS incidents reported, 19/23 have been substantiated, with 17/23 (74%) having adverse animal welfare outcome

[Note: Of the 13 incidents that Animals Australia have reported, 12 have had adverse animal welfare confirmed (92%)]

ESCAS report

59 non-compliance incidents reported:

- 47% (28) Dept (should this be DAFF or just Dept?)
- 31% (18) Self
- 22% (13) Others

This does not tally with the website in which, out of the **total** reports there are:

- 25 Others
- 16 Self
- 0 recorded for Dept

and which in completed investigations there are:

- 16 Others

1 Self

37/59 – no direct animal welfare impact

22/59 - animal welfare impact (16 independent, 1 self reported = 17 so presumably 5 from Dept?)

Given that only 23 ESCAS investigations were completed, that means 36 investigations must be from the Dept (not 28 as listed) and of these, 31/36 non critical

FURTHER NOTE: p 51 reports a total of 22 instances of non-compliance with possible direct animal welfare impact but the numbers only add up to 21.

ENDS

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