

15 November 2012

MEDIA RELEASE

What really happened in Bahrain?

The letter below was posted on the Wellard website as part of their explanation of how the Pakistan disaster came about. VALE assumed that the consignment had been rejected due to the presence of scabby mouth, which is the 'disease of convenience' when commercial rivalries play out in the Middle East. What was puzzling, but not entirely unexpected, was that the post-*Cormo* Memorandum of Understanding (between the Bahrain and Australian Governments) which purported to allow unloading of sheep when questions of health were being established had been ignored or not invoked. However, the letter implies that the importer was indeed able to unload some of the sheep and dispose of the infected sheep at sea; the numbers involved remain a mystery.

By the date of the letter – 30 August 2012 – there is strong evidence that the *Ocean Drover* was already on its way to Pakistan. We believe, given the comment made by Minister Joe Ludwig on Four Corners, that the exporter had made a commercial decision to divert the sheep to another market and there is a question as to whether they were ever actually rejected by Bahrain. What is clear is that DAFF fast-tracked new export documentation for Pakistan encouraged by Wellard's assurances that they had already been through the process required to obtain ESCAS approval for the PK Livestock facilities. A win-win situation for Wellard: avert another potential *Cormo* disaster, expedite the opening of a new market by putting pressure on DAFF, and sell sheep which had lost their value in their intended destination.

What followed was a catalogue of mistakes for which the sheep paid a terrible price. By not notifying the Pakistanis that the sheep had been diverted from, if not rejected by, Bahrain, the train of tragic events described on Four Corners was set in motion. It is also doubtful whether Wellard ever had control of the animals in Pakistan as there are local media reports of animals being sold to individual butchers, restaurants and hotels very soon after arrival, which in itself is a breach of ESCAS. A Pakistani Government report showed that 1495 sheep just disappeared. Moreover, the facility they were sent to was not an approved quarantine facility – so how did that get ESCAS approval from the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry? By not ensuring that the sheep were placed in an approved quarantine facility, the animals were at the mercy of the local authorities who, for whatever reasons, were determined that they were not going to be 'processed' at PK Livestock.

ENDS

For more information contact Dr Sue Foster on 0423 783 689, info@vale.org.au

**Letter from Bahrain's Ministry of Municipalities & Agricultural Affairs
authorising the unloading of sheep**

[The full letter is available on Wellard's website. Go to <http://www.wellard.com.au/>, then click on 'Wellard statement on Pakistan'.]

TRANSLATION FROM THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

Job No TH 12239

Kingdom of Bahrain
Ministry of Municipalities & Agricultural Affairs
Office of the Undersecretary
Phone: 17501555-17501550, Fax: 17224129, PO Box 53 Manamah Bahrain
90 Years of Municipality Leadership

Ref: 993/2012
Date: 30/8/2012

The respected Brother Ibrahim Mohammad Ali Zainal
Chairman of the Board – Al-Bahrain Livestock Company

Re: Sheep Consignment to the Kingdom

With reference to the above subject, we wish to inform you that the Ministry, who is keen on ensuring that contagious diseases do not come into the Kingdom, has commissioned veterinary experts from outside the kingdom in order to evaluate the health status of the sheep which is imported via MV Ocean Drover, and based on their recommendations and on the exchange of information with the Quarantine and Veterinary Control Section in the Agricultural Affairs, the following has been decided:

Firstly: Any sheep proven to be infected with any of the contagious diseases shall not be allowed entry and shall be disposed of onboard the ship.

Secondly: The sheep which is not infected shall be allowed entry, after taking precautionary veterinary measures on board the ship prior to disembarking it, in accordance with the approved veterinary health measures.

In closing, we kindly request that you take the necessary measures towards the above mentioned, and that you liaise with the Quarantine and Veterinary Control Section in the Agricultural Affairs, in relation to the consignment referenced above.

Kind regards,
Dr Nabeel Mohammad Aboul Fat'h
The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Municipalities & Agricultural Affairs