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MEDIA RELEASE

Anti-cruelty measures for Australian live exports to Egypt have been in place since 2006

The live export trade has been rocked yet again by revelations of extreme cruelty to Australian cattle in Egypt. The live export industry is claiming that cruel treatment of our cattle could have been prevented if the Egyptian facilities had been registered under the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS). Vets Against Live Export (VALE) says that this claim is false.

The claim ignores the fact that in 2006, following revelations by Animals Australia of cruelty to cattle, the Australian Government banned live export to Egypt. The government then put in place a Memorandum of Understanding with the Egyptian Government on the handling and slaughter of live Australian animals, and introduced additional regulations for exporters to ensure that cruelty of this nature would not happen again.

The scheme, developed by the Australian Government, the live export industry and the Egyptian Government, included requirements that Australian cattle be received, processed and slaughtered at only two Egyptian establishments: Ain Sokhna (approved in 2008) and Adabaya (approved in 2011).

In a statement released on 28 September 2006, the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry announced that it had put in place new arrangements which provided assurances that international animal welfare standards (the OIE recommendations) would apply to Australian live animals in Egypt. It said that adherence to the Memorandum of Understanding would be ensured by close monitoring for compliance with its provisions, including “regular audits involving industry and government representatives”. It further noted that all exporters would be required to “declare that they have an arrangement in place with Egyptian importers to ensure that the terms of the MOUs are given effect”.

The industry body LiveCorp also made reference to the arrangements in its Annual Reports for 2007–08 and 2009–10, pointing out that there had been significant investment in training Egyptian personnel in improving animal welfare practices.

VALE's legal advisor Dr Malcolm Caulfield said: “The provisions in place in 2008 are legally no different from those currently applying under ESCAS.”

Dr Sue Foster, spokesperson for VALE, said: "Industry claims that the inclusion of Egypt in the ESCAS system will prevent the sort of cruelty which has been reported is simply a distraction. This cruelty should not have happened under the existing protocols. Everything the industry is asking for has actually been in place since 2008."

The fact that such appalling cruelty has occurred despite the best efforts of the Australian Government and the live export industry emphasises again that Australian animals cannot be protected once they leave the country. In addition, it seriously undermines the argument repeatedly mounted by industry that live export must continue in order to improve animal welfare standards in other countries. For years, Australian money has been spent on trying to improve animal welfare for our cattle exported to Egypt, yet we are still seeing these repeated instances of unacceptable abuse.

ENDS

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