

30 April 2014

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Chief Veterinary Officer's endorsement of live export trade exposed for lack of science**

A peer-reviewed article published recently in *The Veterinary Journal* has exposed an inherent conflict of interest within the Department of Agriculture.

The article, co-authored by VALE spokesperson Dr Sue Foster, was written in response to a 2013 guest editorial in the same journal by Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Mark Schipp. In his article Dr Schipp presented a glowing endorsement of the live export trade, and in doing so made several claims.

#### **Claim 1: The Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) are based on scientific research.**

There is actually no scientific research behind many of the standards nor have they ever been subject to any detailed analysis. Dr Schipp failed to reference any peer-reviewed science in his editorial to back the claims, linking only to industry-commissioned reports, which are not subject to external scrutiny.

#### **Claim 2: Only healthy and fit animals are loaded for export.**

It is impossible under current inspection and preparation arrangements to discount the presence of inherent health problems, especially inanition, salmonellosis and scabby mouth in sheep, and therefore inappropriate to claim that 'only healthy and fit animals are loaded for export'.

#### **Claim 3: Weight gain in animals arriving at the export destination implies good animal welfare.**

Where animals are closely confined, they can often gain weight despite other major challenges to their welfare, thus weight gain is not a valid indicator of welfare in isolation.

Dr Foster collaborated with acclaimed US veterinary behaviourist Dr Karen Overall to highlight the lack of welfare science inherent in live export voyages. "Australia makes much of the fact that they are world leaders in live export animal welfare. Thus, it is important that the veterinary profession and interested observers worldwide are exposed to the lack of science behind these claims," Dr Foster said.

RSPCA Australia asked another pertinent question: "Why was it considered appropriate for Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer to publicly express support for existing live export standards while chairing a steering committee charged with reviewing these standards?"

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