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### **Vietnam, a collusion between government and exporters**

Sickening footage of distressed cattle being sledgehammered to death in Vietnam is unfortunately just the latest in Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) failures. ESCAS was introduced in the 'fall-out' from Indonesia in 2011. The intention was to make Australian exporters legally responsible for keeping animals within approved supply chains to ensure extreme animal welfare abuse did not occur.

Evidence from the Department of Agriculture's own records indicate recurrent breaches of ESCAS over the past 4 years and that not one live export company has faced prosecution or had their export licence suspended.

Government reports from Vietnam alone indicate that over 4,000 exported cattle and buffalo have been exposed to the risk of the widespread and routine Vietnamese practices of sledgehammering and flooding. The reports have primarily come from industry 'self-reports' but 'self-reports' are not likely to be representative of the real number of animals leaving supply chains. One inside estimate is that up to 5% of exported animals (15,000 per year) are moving outside the supply chains into other countries with traditional slaughter practices, or killed in non-approved slaughterhouses in Vietnam. Despite broad industry awareness of the scale of non-compliance and the associated repercussions for animals, live exporters have continued to export high numbers of cattle into Vietnam.

VALE spokesperson Dr Sue Foster said: "Vietnam is just the thin edge of a very fat wedge. Non-compliance in all major importing countries is routine and lack of government action is equally routine. ESCAS has never been legally enforceable and the exporters know that."

Dr Foster continued "Even when ESCAS works, the required standards are only those achievable in third world countries. These conditions would never be acceptable under Australian welfare laws."

**ENDS**

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