



5th December 2012

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Ms Rebecca Irwin
First Assistant Secretary
Live Animal Exports
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858
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Rebecca.Irwin@daff.gov.au

Dear Ms Irwin

Re: Substitution of vets for accredited stockpersons on live export voyages

As you are aware, there is a legal requirement for a stockperson, accredited by live export industry body LiveCorp, to be present on every live export voyage up to and including the discharge of the last animal at the last port of call. This requirement is reflected in the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock* (Version 2.3), and compliance with those standards is a condition of a live export licence.

In addition, there is, in our view, a completely separate requirement, arising when the Department specifies in an Approved Export Program for a particular voyage, that an AQIS Accredited Veterinarian (“AAV”) is to be on board a live export vessel.

In our opinion, the roles of the stockperson and the AAV are completely separate. This view is confirmed by the comment in the Explanatory Memorandum to the *Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Legislation Amendment Bill 2004*, which says “[t]he veterinary tasks aboard ships are primarily diagnostic and advisory, and stockmen and crew are responsible for stock management.” Thus, even when an AAV is required to be present, the absence of a stockperson will have serious negative implications for animal welfare.

We have corresponded previously with your department about the voyage of the MV *Hereford Express* to Singapore and Malaysia in November and December 2008 (see email dated 9 May 2012 from Dean Merrilees to Malcolm Caulfield), as we were aware of the possibility that for some of the voyage a stockman was not present. In his email, Mr Merrilees asserted (relevantly): "...the exporter sought and received approval from the department for the AAV to leave the vessel after discharge in Singapore and be replaced by an accredited stockman. This approval was affected by an email exchange and a new Approved Export Program was not issued."

We note that this matter was the subject of a statement by Michael Stanton of exporter International Livestock Export Pty Ltd to ABC Lateline in July 2012 (see <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-07-25/ile-statement-for-lateline/4152136>), in which he said "...a stockman will be present for discharge in Singapore and complete discharge in Malaysia. There are very experienced stockman (sic) onboard (sic) as part of the Vessel's (sic) crew...[t]he voyage from Singapore to Malaysia is only 6 hours a stockman was in Malaysia for discharge..." It appears to us that Mr Stanton's statement could be interpreted as meaning there was no stockperson on board for the final leg of the voyage. Dr Reeve-Johnson has informed us there was also no stockperson on board for the first leg of the voyage.

It has also come to our attention from other sources that substitution of vets for stockpersons may have occurred previously and may still be occurring. In our view, this is unacceptable and possibly illegal.

Could you therefore, as a matter of urgency:

1. inform me on how many occasions exporters have been allowed by your department to waive the requirement for a stockperson to be on board a live export ship, and on what legal basis that waiver has been granted
2. please advise whether your department has any process in place to independently check whether a stockperson or an AAV has in fact travelled on a live export voyage, and if so, what that process is?

Yours sincerely

Sue Foster BVSc MVetClinStud FACVSc (Spokesperson)