



c/- Lady Barron Post Office
Flinders Island
TAS 7255

Email: info@vale.org.au

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VALE opposes industry proposal to dilute regulation of animal welfare standards in live export

Open letter from Vets Against Live Export (VALE) to Alison Penfold, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Livestock Exporters Council (ALEC), PO Box 5552, Kingston ACT 2604

Dear Ms Penfold

I write on behalf of Vets Against Live Export (VALE) concerning proposals by the live export industry to change the standards governing the welfare of animals exported from Australia (Livestock Global Assurance Program; LGAP). You have expressed the opinion that you would welcome a submission on this matter from VALE.

As a preliminary matter, we note that the form which you have posted on the relevant website is entirely prescriptive, requiring comment on defined paragraphs of LGAP. VALE is not interested in making a submission in this prescriptive fashion.

The substantive point, so far as VALE is concerned, is that it is a fundamental principle of animal welfare that animals used for food should be slaughtered as close to their source as possible. Live export of animals from Australia is inconsistent with this principle, particularly where animals are transported aboard ships for long durations, in overcrowded conditions, exposed to extremes of weather and other conditions inconsistent with maintenance of good animal welfare.

It is equally evident that live export is also unacceptable to the Australian public because of the treatment of animals in overseas destinations. Consistent with this view, our recent survey, conducted as an independent poll by UMR Strategic Research, demonstrates that the majority of people polled want to see live export stopped. In our opinion, seeking to improve the treatment of animals in importing countries which have no culture of animal welfare is nothing more than an unrealistic aspiration.

We know that Australian animals continue to suffer unacceptably both on live export voyages and during transport and slaughter in overseas countries.

We regard your present proposal to put regulation of welfare into the hands of the owners and operators of overseas facilities as nothing more than a cynical exercise by those who stand to profit from this unacceptable and unethical trade. The intention is clearly to make life easier and more profitable for those with a vested interest. VALE does not support such a proposal.

Yours sincerely

Dr Sue Foster BVSc MVetClinStud FANZCVS
VALE Spokesperson