

LIVE EXPORTS TO INDONESIA

FAQs



Australia's live export trade has been sending live animals to the Middle East for over three decades and cattle to South East Asia for two decades. Some 150 million sheep have been exported to the Middle East during that time and over 6.4 million cattle have been exported to Indonesia.

Why should live exports be banned?

Every animal protection organisation in the world opposes live animal export on the basis of unacceptable cruelty. Investigations by Animals Australia since 2003 have revealed that despite Australia's involvement in the marketplace for decades, exported animals are still routinely subjected to brutal handling and are slaughtered whilst fully conscious. Australian live exporters have consistently shown that they are willing to supply animals to countries where there are no laws to protect them from cruelty and where inhumane handling and slaughter are routine.

What did the recent investigation in Indonesia reveal?

Animals Australia investigators visited ten abattoirs in four cities on the islands of Java and Sumatra. Once again this investigation revealed the willingness of Australia's live export industry to supply animals regardless of how brutally they will be treated, and disturbingly in Indonesia, to even supply equipment that facilitates and encourages cruel treatment. Evidence documented, revealed that on a nightly basis Australian cattle are being subjected to torture techniques (such as tail twisting/breaking, eye-gouging and tendon slashing) to force them to move into position for slaughter.

Some of the worst cruelty documented resulted from the use of Australian-designed Mark I restraint boxes. 103 Mark I boxes have been installed in Indonesia under the MLA/Livecorp program to enable Indonesian workers to manage Australian cattle whilst continuing to use their traditional method of roping slaughter. This results in a prolonged and distressing death. The box confines Australian cattle while their legs are roped. When the box is opened the cattle struggle against the leg ropes and trip, falling with their entire weight onto a sloping concrete slab. Cattle automatically try to regain their feet which

results in them crashing their heads against the concrete slab and even breaking their jaws.

Is the Mark 1 restraint box an improvement on traditional slaughter methods?

Both methods are cruel and completely unacceptable. On viewing a Mark 1 restraint box in operation, the world's leading expert on livestock handling and slaughter, Temple Grandin, stated that it, "breached every humane standard anywhere in the world" and was "unacceptable and absolutely atrocious".

Why didn't investigators take this footage directly to the government?

Footage of further cruel treatment of Australian exported sheep in the Middle East was taken directly to Senator Ludwig in November 2010. He failed to take appropriate action and instead put finding a solution back in the hands of live exporters. Requests for meetings with the Minister since February this year have also been declined. In April, the Minister was advised about the severity of cruelty witnessed during the investigation in Indonesia but he has not requested to see the footage or discuss what was observed. The RSPCA's and Animals Australia's experience is that only when the public are made aware of the cruel treatment of Australian exported animals via the media, does the government take notice. The suspension of the Egypt trade in 2006 only occurred after footage was aired on 60 Minutes, despite Agriculture Minister Peter McGauran already being informed that cattle were being brutalised in Bassateen abattoir.

But the live export industry claims to take animal welfare seriously

Were this true, Australia's live export industry would not supply animals to markets where there are no laws to protect them from cruelty. Australia's live exporters knowingly supplied nearly one million cattle to Egypt in the full knowledge that it was routine

practice for animals to have their leg tendons slashed and eyes stabbed to disable them prior to slaughter.

Their apparent 'interest' in animal welfare has only emerged since Animals Australia started investigating and exposing the treatment of exported livestock in 2003. There were no industry initiatives in importing countries until this time, despite the industry being fully aware of the cruel treatment of Australian animals.

Designing, funding and installing cruel restraint devices in Indonesia that have been condemned by leading international slaughter experts and that breach international standards lays to rest once and for all any claim the industry cares about animal welfare.

But the industry claims that Australia's presence in Indonesia (and other importing countries) gives us greater influence to improve animal welfare generally

This statement is completely unfounded and is part of a cunning industry PR campaign to keep farmer and government support. Australian industry presence in Indonesia has in fact made animal welfare worse as Australian funded and installed equipment has set a standard of cruelty that the Indonesians are now copying. Animal welfare in Indonesia (and other importing countries) will only improve when animal welfare legislation is passed or when current animal welfare legislation is amended to include penalty provisions and is enforced. The only significant welfare improvement in the Middle East, despite the live export industry exporting there for 30 years, is the introduction of stunning in Jordan which resulted from an Animals Australia investigation and direct involvement of the Jordanian royal family.

It is claimed Australia sets the world's highest standards for the export of livestock

Under current arrangements many of the Australian standards for the export of livestock (ASEL) are unenforceable or simply unenforced. Tens of thousands of animals continue to die each year on live export vessels. Despite high mortality shipment investigations conducted by AQIS regularly revealing clear breaches of ASEL, rarely have AQIS imposed penalties on exporters. A key observation of the 2004 Keniry review into the live trade was that the industry was self-regulating and that this had to change. Despite this, seven years later, there is an abundance of evidence that nothing has changed.

What about the industry 'Action Plan'?

The industry's recent global strategy and Indonesia 'action plan' was developed in direct response to

evidence documented during this investigation in Indonesia. Despite knowing about the cruel treatment of Australian cattle in Indonesia for decades, once again the industry has only promised to act when faced with exposure. Their 'action plan' is a predictable public relations response designed once again to mislead farmers and the government into continuing to support the trade. It in no way addresses the inherent animal welfare problems in Indonesia. Animals will not be protected from cruelty in importing countries until animal protection laws are passed and enforced. There is no incentive for importing countries to take such action when a country such as Australia is willing to supply animals regardless of how brutally they will be treated.

What about Australian farmers?

Numerous economic reports have confirmed that live exports are undermining Australia's meat processing industry - an industry five times more lucrative than live exports. ACIL Tasman's reviews into the live sheep trade found that phasing out live sheep exports would have minimal impact on farmers and would in fact reap greater benefits for farmers and the economy through increased processing in Australia. Reports into the impact of live cattle exports on Queensland's beef industry have found that live exports are directly competing with the beef processing sector to the point of threatening its future viability.

What does the RSPCA and Animals Australia want?

This investigation provided further irrefutable evidence that the live export industry cannot be trusted. They will without hesitation allow animals to be subjected to cruel treatment, torture and brutality and then go so far as to facilitate it by installing inhumane devices that have been condemned by world experts. The live cattle trade with Indonesia must be halted immediately and the Australian Government must announce an end date for live animal exports to all other countries.

No amount of profit or excuses can justify continued support of the cruelty inherent to the live export trade

Were those involved in this trade made accountable to Australian animal welfare laws they would be prosecuted and convicted for animal cruelty. This trade has continued only because it operates outside of the reach of Australian animal protection legislation. Chilled and frozen meat exports from Australia are already worth over five times the value of live exports annually and would further increase if Australia was not providing importing nations with the alternative of live animals.