Submission – Live Export Review

Please find below my submission for the review of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock.

I am grateful the review is occurring, because the gravity of the current situation is unbearable and unacceptable. Like many others, I only became aware of how sheep were being treated following the most recent expose. We should not find ourselves in a position where we are relying on whistleblowers to bring to the surface these wrong doings.

I have read the ASEL and your draft review. For me, the extreme heat stress is a big factor in the suffering of animals being exported from Australia and I can see this is being addressed through a separate review.

I am struggling to understand why the ASEL have not been complied with up to now but I am pleased something is happening to initiate well needed change. Any review has to recommend much better conditions and in some cases where minimum standards cannot be maintained, no exporting at all. The footage we saw from the voyage last year tells us that.

My ideal would be an end to live exports. I find it difficult to show support for improving export conditions where, in the event that these animals survive the journey, they will more than likely endure horrendous pain and suffering at their end destinations – it’s a situation where they can’t win.

Nevertheless, my contribution to the review is detailed below. Detailed evidence to support these changes is provided in the submissions put forward by RSPCA Australia and the Australian Veterinary Association.

**Sourcing and preparation of animals**

* No cattle should be exported from southern ports across the equator during the high risk May to October period.
* The upper weight limit for all cattle being exported should be set at 500 kg, not at 650 kg, with no exemptions.
* Sheep must be rested for at least two clear days after shearing and prior to loading, to overcome the cumulative stress of road transport, handling and shearing and to ensure all shearing wounds are healed.
* No sheep, whatever the breed, should be allowed on board a ship with more than 25mm of wool or hair

**Space allowance for sheep and cattle**

* The space allowances proposed in the draft Standards are still far too small and will force animals to ‘time share’ their space.
* Space allowances must be increased to ensure all animals in a group are able to lie down comfortably at the same time and easily access feed and water, whether they are in a registered premises or on-board ship

**Heat stress risk assessment (HSRA)**

* The heat stress risk assessment (HSRA) model must be applied to all voyages crossing the equator, at all times of year, from all ports.

**Voyage reporting**

* Voyage reporting requirements should be increased to include more detailed daily welfare monitoring at the pen level, with monitored pens chosen independently of exporters to ensure transparency and accuracy.
* Voyage reports should be made publicly available to demonstrate that exporters have nothing to hide.

**Onboard management**

* Ammonia levels must be tracked using ammonia meters, and action taken when they reach harmful levels.

**Onboard personnel**

* There must be at least one accredited stockperson per 2,500 head of cattle and 10,000 head of sheep (not 3,000 cattle and 30,000 sheep), to allow effective monitoring of stock. A qualified Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) must be on board every live export voyage, for supervision and monitoring, as well as an independent auditor with ultimate responsibility for reporting requirements.

**Species permitted to be exported**

* Live export of sheep to the Middle East during the May to October high risk period must cease immediately.
* The live export of feral buffalo should be prohibited, as they are unused to human contact and clearly do not tolerate handling and transport without serious welfare compromise.
* The export of feral goats, camels and deer should be prohibited, based on previous extreme mortality events and serious concerns over the handling and care of these species.

I look forward to seeing how the Minister will be addressing community expectations and animal welfare concerns in the review of the ASEL standards.

Colleen Pearson