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Townsville Against Live Export Inc. believes that the live animal export trade operating from the Port of Townsville and elsewhere in Australia is cruel and unnecessary and that there are alternatives that would be better for the animals and for our community.

Until the trade ends we would like to see conditions improved to reduce the suffering experienced by animals going into the live export trade.

The first shipment of cattle from the Port of Townsville to China caused us great concern about the welfare of the animals.

The Bison Express left the Port of Townsville at about 17:00hrs on 17 January and arrived in Ningbo Port, China at about 08:00hrs on 28 January. Unloading did not commence until 21:30 hrs in the evening, as reported in the China News on 31 January.

We note that "the time for a voyage is calculated from completion of loading in Australia until anticipated arrival at the first port of discharge overseas." We do not have access to the time of completion of loading but we do know that the time given above is much longer than the "voyage took about 9½ days" as reported in the Townsville Bulletin on 7 March 2018. We do have concerns about the inaccuracy of such reporting. We also have concerns about the usage of the term "anticipated".

The weather in the country where the cattle are sourced and the weather in the destination country is also a concern for animal welfare. The temperature in central Queensland from where the 1606 cattle were sourced is unknown to us but at this time of the year is likely to be greater than 40°C. In Townsville on 17 January it was 32°C and in Ningbo on 28 January was 3°C, by the evening it may well have been a sub-zero number which is unknown to our group.

We support calls by the RSPCA and other animal welfare groups for changes which would improve animal welfare including:

- Restrictions on the export of animals, especially to the Middle East, during the hottest months of the year to reduce the risk of animals, suffering from heat stress
- Restrictions on the export of animals from ports located in the tropics such as Townsville and Darwin to ports in the northern hemisphere where temperatures can be close to zero, as was the case with the cattle exported to China on the Bison Express in January 2018.
- For animals not to be loaded onto live export ships during extreme weather events. In Townsville we have seen cattle loaded while the city has been experiencing days of very heavy rain, after previously standing in wet yards, which puts them at increased risk of slipping and becoming lame during loading and the sea voyage.
(See Mortality Investigation Report 61 cattle exported by sea to Vietnam in March 2016. This shipment was exported from Townsville during a period of prolonged wet weather. All the animals were over 500kg. In addition to problems with lame cattle due to the wet conditions, the stockperson reported that, "it appeared some animals had fallen asleep on top of others early in the voyage which may have resulted in smothering).
Cattle have also been observed waiting for long periods on road trains parked outside the Port on days when the city was experiencing high temperatures and high humidity.



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- For weight restrictions to prevent heavier animals, such as cattle weighing over 500kg being exported live, as these animals are at a greater risk of being unable to get up should they fall or suffer foot and leg problems during the voyage.
- For additional space and bedding to be provided on all voyages so animals have space to lie down comfortably and have easy access to clean water and feed. Currently there is no requirement for cattle on short haul voyages from Townsville to destinations in Indonesia and Vietnam to be provided with any bedding.
- For competent and independent vets, employed by a third party, on all live export ships. Currently there is no requirement for cattle exported from Townsville on short haul voyages, anticipated to take less than 10 days to complete, to be accompanied by a vet. Given the difficulties in accurately estimating the time required for such voyages having a vet on all live export ships would ensure better welfare standards for all animals.