



Fact Sheet: Were the MLA and LiveCorp Aware of the Horrific Slaughtering Practices in Indonesia Prior to June 2011?

The Meat and Livestock Authority (“MLA”) and LiveCorp commissioned an independent report in 2010 into “animal welfare conditions for cattle in Indonesia from point of arrival from Australia to slaughter”.

The report was delivered in May 2010. It can be viewed as appendix 1 to the report titled: “Live Trade Animal Welfare Partnership 2009/10 - Indonesian point of slaughter improvements”. This report is available at:

http://www.daff.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1886477/indonesia.pdf

This is a report referred to on the Four Corners program “A Bloody Business”.

Appendix 1 is a panel report prepared by Professor Emeritus in Veterinary Science at Melbourne University, Prof Ivan Caple (head of panel), Prof. Neville Gregory, University of London; Dr Penelope McGowan, beef cattle veterinarian and member of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA); and Dr Paul Cusack, a nutrition and feedlot expert.

Significantly, the report was delivered to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (“DAFF”) as a report into what had been done with funding made available under the “Live Trade Animal Welfare Partnership”. This was a 2009/10 budget announcement of the Australian Government. \$3.2 million was made available, with \$1.6 million from the Government with matching funding from cattle producers and exporters.

The report indicates that the barbaric practices aired on Four Corners were observed by the panel and duly reported to MLA and Livecorp. In turn, DAFF received the report also.

Issue 1 – “Casting”

Casting is the practice of causing the animal to fall on its side onto the concrete plinth used to ultimately slaughter the animal. Ropes are used. The fall can be a significant animal welfare issue. Where the animal regains its feet, the use of the ropes can lead to significant injuries through the animal becoming stressed and lashing out in an attempt to escape the situation, whilst having ropes secured around two of its legs. The likelihood of significant injury is high.

The report states at page 31:

“Of the 26 acts of slaughter observed using restraining boxes:

- *17% of animals went down and regained their feet on release from the restraining box. This was typically associated with the restraining ropes being too long and SOP not being observed.”*

Issue 2 – “Head Slapping”

Graphic images were shown on Four Corners of beasts “cast” on their sides who then commenced to thrash their heads around, including smashing their heads into the concrete plinth used for slaughter.

The report states at page 31:

“Of the 29 cattle slaughtered with and without restraining boxes:

... ..

- *On average, there were 3.5 head lifts per animal once cast. **Head lifts were observed to pose a significant risk to animal welfare.***

(emphasis added)

Issue 3 – Complications with both “Casting” and “Head Slapping”

The report states at page 31:

“While restraining boxes were observed to significantly improve animal welfare, where the severity of the fall was severe and head slapping occurred, significant animal welfare issues were identified that should be addressed through the SOP and training.”

Issue 4 – Eye gouging and tail breaking

The report states at page 34:

“Some instances of unnecessary stimulation involving interference with the eyes and tail twisting were observed immediately prior to slaughter once the animal was restrained and cast.”

Issue 5 – Excessive cuts attempting to sever carotid artery

The Four Corners program aired footage of Slaughterers using up to 33 cuts to slaughter an animal. Professor Caple also indicated during an interview aired on the program that the panel had observed a similar practice of a Slaughterer attempting up to 18 cuts to slaughter an animal. This is confirmed by the report at page 32:

“In particular, at one abattoir in West Java, the incision was made with a single cut to the neck, whereas at an abattoir in Sumatra the neck was struck with a knife using a hard impact to sever the skin above the larynx and then up to 18 cuts were made to sever the neck and both arteries.”

Issue 6 – False Aneurysm Formation

False aneurysm formation is a significant animal welfare issue that really only a skilled, professional eye can pick up. The bluntest way it can be described is that it results in a slower painful death for the animal. Viewers of the graphic images on Four Corners could not be expected to be aware of it. The report on page 32 indicates:

“Although on all occasions both carotid arteries were completely cut, bleeding was significantly impaired in 10% of cattle due to false aneurysm formation in both carotid arteries, possibly resulting in extended consciousness. The SOP does not currently include guidelines for the management of occluded arteries and false aneurysm and slaughtermen were not observed to appreciate this as being a potential animal welfare issue.”

Issue 7 – Throwing buckets of water at immobilized animals

The Four Corners program aired footage of abattoir employees throwing buckets of water at immobilized animals just prior to slaughter. The report at page 34 states:

“Sensory stimulation, observed as disturbed behaviour in some animals, was apparent immediately prior to slaughter during the casting process and while restrained with ropes in recumbency. This was particularly apparent when buckets of water were thrown over the animal before slaughter.”

And at page 36:

“The process of washing the animal by hosing or bucketing water immediately ante mortem caused unnecessary stimulation and reaction in the cattle. This washing was reported to be a requirement of Halal slaughter; however, this claim was not verified.”

Issue 8 – Traditional slaughter

Of the most graphic and horrific images shown on Four Corners, the “traditional slaughter” method was amongst the worst. This is the process where Australian cattle were subjected to a 20 to 30 minute

process of “roping down” without the use of a restraining box. Cruel methods to force the animal to recumbency are often used.

The report at page 30 states:

“Restraining boxes were observed to be used when available with traditional slaughter observed in one location.”

And at page 33:

“The slaughter of Australian cattle in Indonesia was assessed against the OIE Code. A range of facilities and slaughter methods were observed including traditional slaughter, assisted traditional slaughter incorporating restraining boxes and slaughter using westernised abattoir facilities.”

The report makes clear that of the 29 animals viewed being slaughtered, at least 3 were done by traditional slaughter.

Conclusion

It is to be steadfastly borne in mind that the report on animal welfare issues in the slaughtering process only dealt with a small and random sample of 29 animals slaughtered. Yet all of the practices aired on Four Corners were quite apparent in this very small and random sample.

There is irrefutably evidence that as at May 2010, the MLA and LiveCorp were put clearly on notice as to the animal welfare issues that were demonstrated graphically by the Four Corners program “A Bloody Business”.

Moreover, the evidence was forwarded to DAFF. A significant issue is what action they took, if any, and whether the Minister was briefed on the situation.