



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture

SECRETARY

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Mr Tim Watling
Secretary
Australian Senate
Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs
and Transport - Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Watling

Thank you for your letter of 5 August 2015 inviting the Department of Agriculture to make a submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport – Legislation Committee’s review of the Voice for Animals (Independent Office of Animal Welfare) Bill 2015.

The Department of Agriculture works with the Australian livestock industry to improve the productivity and profitability of the industry and improve farm gate returns.

There is a strong link between animal welfare and livestock industry profitability. Improved animal welfare outcomes contribute to:

- increased productivity – improved animal welfare practices lead to contented, healthier animals that produce a higher quality, safer, and higher value product.
- improved competitiveness – products produced in systems underpinned by robust animal welfare arrangements are likely to enhance their access to domestic and export markets and achieve higher prices.
- sustainability – increased community acceptance of livestock animal welfare arrangements, leads to better market access, higher prices and enhanced long-term sustainability of livestock industries.

The success of Australia’s livestock industries will be increasingly influenced by research, development and strategies that improve animal welfare outcomes.

On 31 July 2013, the then government announced it would establish an independent position, an Inspector General of Animal Welfare, to review and audit Australia’s live animal export trade processes and systems to strengthen Australia’s animal welfare assurance system.

On 31 October 2013, the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, announced the government would not proceed with the establishment of an Inspector General of Animal Welfare. The government advised it was confident that the establishment of a regulatory framework for livestock exports was designed to minimise the risk of adverse animal welfare outcomes and that the Inspector General position added an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy without any practical benefit.

Role of the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments in animal welfare

Australia's three tiers of government each have animal welfare responsibilities. While animal welfare responsibilities vary between jurisdictions, legislative responsibility for animal welfare within Australia rests primarily with state and territory governments, and local governments. The Australian Government's responsibilities for animal welfare arise from specific powers in relation to external trade and treaties that encompass some animal welfare issues.

The department has a range of responsibilities for animal welfare. The department:

- Administers a regulatory framework that seeks to ensure that animals in the live export trade are handled and slaughtered in accordance with standards set by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and that export abattoirs meet state and territory requirements and animal welfare laws.
- Issues export certificates for all live animals including commercial livestock species, companion and assistance animals (which includes greyhounds) and horses to meet importing country requirements including that the animal is fit to travel.
- Participates in international animal welfare matters including engagement at a global, regional and individual country level.
- Supports the development of nationally consistent animal welfare arrangements, such as animal welfare standards and guidelines, biosecurity arrangements and national approaches to policy matters such as reducing the incidence of farm trespass.
- Works with state and territory governments who have responsibility for domestic livestock welfare legislation, including for livestock, animals in research and teaching, aquatic animals, native and introduced wildlife, animals used for work, recreation, entertainment and display and pets and companion animals.
- Supports livestock industries to make improvements to animal health and welfare through matched funding for research and development.
- Supports the implementation of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) as the national blueprint for sustainable improvements in animal welfare.

The department's main animal welfare roles and responsibilities are described in more detail at Attachment A and the department's role in administering the live animal export trade is described at Attachment B.

Yours sincerely

Daryl Quinlivan

2 September 2015

Attachment A – Department of Agriculture animal welfare roles and responsibilities

The department participates in international fora and works closely with state and territory governments, scientists, animal welfare groups, rural research and development organisations and farmers to improve animal welfare. Key roles and responsibilities include:

- Supporting import and export arrangements for animals, including: monitoring reports of adverse animal welfare situations, including animal cruelty, developing import and export protocols, implementing improved animal health management in the Asia Pacific region, providing scientific and technical advice to support business objectives including risk analysis and policy reviews, contributing to international animal health, aquatic pest standards and animal welfare consistent with Australia's policy objectives.
- Representing Australia's interests in the development of international standards for animal welfare including through the Chief Veterinary Officer of Australia and the World Organisations for Animal Health (OIE) National Focal Point for Animal Welfare via engagement with the OIE Animal Welfare Working Group, the Management Committee of OIE Collaborating Centre on Animal Welfare Science and Bioethics, and other fora. This includes participation in technical working groups, representation and engagement with the OIE, compliance reporting, contribution to development of international animal welfare standards, technical cooperation on animal welfare (e.g. Middle East cooperation) and trade-related matters, Quadrilateral animal welfare network, European Union (EU) cooperation, contribute expertise to OIE standards development, participating in the OIE Regional Animal Welfare Strategy for Asia, the Far East and Oceania.
- Managing the Export Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) arrangements, which, requires exporters to have commercial arrangements with supply chain partners to provide humane treatment and handling of livestock from arrival in the importing country up to the point of slaughter (see Attachment B for further details).
- Managing export certification for all live animals including commercial livestock species, companion and assistance animals (which includes greyhounds) and horses to meet importing country requirements including that the animal is fit to travel
- Managing the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock, which represent the animal health and welfare requirements that exporters must meet.
- Ensuring that animal welfare requirements, including state and territory requirements for animal welfare legislation, are met at export abattoirs and during live animal exports.
- Providing satisfactory animal welfare for the department's detector dogs and other animals held in government operated quarantine facilities.
- Participating in the Agriculture Minister's forum and the Agriculture Senior Officials Committee's Animal Welfare Task Group, which comprises senior government representatives from all Australian governments.
- Supporting the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy. The Strategy identifies priorities, coordinate stakeholder action and improve consistency across all animal use sectors across Australia.
- Assisting in the review of existing Model Codes of Practice for the welfare of animals and their conversion into new Australian animal welfare standards and guidelines.
- Preparing advice and briefing for the Minister for Agriculture on domestic and international animal welfare matters.
- Participating in the steering committee of the National Animal Welfare Research and Development strategy.

- Collecting levies and administering statutory funding agreements with rural research and development organisations. Livestock industry members are required to pay levies to fund industry initiatives. Where those levies are used to fund research, the Australian Government provides a dollar-for-dollar co-payment up to the amount of 0.5% of the gross domestic product of the industry concerned.
- Participating as an observer in the Livestock Animal Welfare Communications Network group.
- Engaging with government and non-government stakeholders on domestic animal welfare policy issues such as free-range egg production and reducing the incidence of farm trespass.

Attachment B – The department's role in live animal exports

The Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) requires that animal welfare outcomes in countries importing Australia feeder and slaughter livestock must be consistent with World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) international animal welfare standards.

Australian government legislation does not have regulatory reach into destination countries. The ESCAS assurance system requires exporters' to have commercial arrangements with supply chain partners to provide humane treatment and handling of livestock from arrival in the importing country up to the point of slaughter.

ESCAS was introduced to manage and support a sustainable live export industry – it provides a system that allows the management of animal welfare incidents should they occur, without the need for trade suspensions to whole markets. The primary goal of the ESCAS regulatory system is to ensure that Australian livestock exported overseas for feeder or slaughter purposes are managed, transported and slaughtered in accordance with OIE guidelines. Australia is the only country that takes measures beyond its borders to ensure animal welfare is maintained for its livestock.

The Department of Agriculture regulates the livestock animal export industry to ensure that it meets the standards set by Australian livestock export legislation and importing country requirements.

Australian legislation puts animal welfare at the centre of the live animal export trade, aiming to ensure that exporters handle livestock according to international animal welfare standards. This ensures a sustainable future for the export livestock industry.

Exporters must comply with importing country requirements for sourcing, disease testing, vaccination, and treatment, to ensure that export livestock consignments are accepted into the importing country, and a valuable trade can continue. All importing countries rely on an animal health certificate that the department issues, to assure them that the exporter has complied with all their requirements.

The Act and Regulations that relate to the issue of a livestock export licence, and Orders that relate to specific export destinations are:

- *Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997*
- Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry (Export Licensing) Regulations 1998
- Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Regulations 1998
- Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry (Export of Live-stock to Saudi Arabia) Order 2005

The Act and Orders that relate to the preparation of livestock for export by sea and air are:

- *Export Control Act 1982*
- Export Control (Animals) Order 2004

Three declarations made under section 7.03 and section 7.04 of the Export Control Animals Order 2004 relate to countries to which ESCAS applies.

The Orders that relate to standards for the export of livestock are:

- Australian Meat and Live-stock Standards Order 2005
- Export Control (Animals) Order 2004

The standards are the Australian standards for the export of livestock (version 2.3) (ASEL).

The Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) set out standards for the sourcing of export livestock, their management in registered premises, loading onto a vessel, management onboard a vessel and air transport.

The department provides certification for the export of all live animals including commercial livestock species, companion and assistance animals (which includes greyhounds), horses, to meet importing country requirements, including that the animal is fit to travel.

In developing policies and processes for the export of live animals and reproductive material, the department consults broadly with Australian governments, industry representatives and animal welfare groups. The department is:

- Delivering World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) consistent animal welfare outcomes for exported livestock through the implementation of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) regulatory framework.
- Providing science and risk based assessments of applications for the export of live animals and reproductive material and assurance activities that ensure systems and processes achieve required regulatory outcomes.
- Issuing licenses to exporters and approve consignments under the Export Control Act 1982 and Australian Meat and Live-Stock Act 1997, and associated regulations for live animals and reproductive material.
- Delivering efficient and effective regulation through heightened regulatory awareness and compliance.
- Delivering live animal export industry reforms to maintain international markets and improve animal welfare standards.
- Continually improving the efficiency of export certifications, information communication technology, auditing, assessment, compliance monitoring and reporting requirements to enhance regulatory oversight while maintaining market access outcomes for our live animal industries.
- Developing, maintaining and improving relationships with domestic and international stakeholders, including industry and animal welfare organisations, and participating in domestic and international forums to advance Australia's agriculture, food and fibre interests.