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'Disturbing' cruelty halts live exports to Egypt

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The suspension of live cattle exports to Egypt could cost Australia up to \$50 million a year.

On Saturday, the Australian Live-stock Exporters' Council said it had voluntarily suspended exports to Egypt after the release of graphic video footage showing animal cruelty.

ALEC chief executive **Alison Penfold** said the footage, from Animals Australia, was disturbing and came as a setback in negotiations with the coun-

try over live exports. Live exports stopped between Australia and Egypt in July 2012 over unrelated health issues regarding growth hormones.

"However, we were close to finalising the new health arrangements that met Egyptian concerns. So there was interest in getting that trade up again very soon," Ms Penfold said.

The video footage, which was filmed at two Egyptian abattoirs, one last October and one in April this year, showed an emergency slaughter of an injured animal which was deemed

vicious and clumsy, and disturbing practices during the slaughter process.

Ms Penfold said there were about 3000 heads of cattle from Australia that had been in the two holding facilities since July. Egypt accounts for 5 per cent of Australia's total live cattle exports.

"In 2012, noting that we only operated for six months, it was worth \$24 million to Australian exporters and producers," Ms Penfold said. In 2010 it was worth \$48 million, she said.

The federal Minister for Agriculture,

Joe Ludwig, said the government was investigating. "The Egyptian authorities, as I understand it, have also joined with us in a co-operative way to investigate these matters immediately," Senator Ludwig said. "I think cattle producers would feel exactly like I would, they would be sickened too."

Opposition agriculture spokesman **John Cobb** said he agreed with the suspension of trade.

"The Coalition sees the live trade as being important, but it's also important it's done properly," Mr Cobb said.

He said live exports were an important trade to northern Australia and anything detrimental could flow on into other areas of cattle exports.

Ms Penfold said the suspension would be costly for cattle exporters.

"When prices are so depressed and when there's pretty bad climatic conditions, it was really offering another market for northern cattle," Ms Penfold said.

"Right now any market that can provide an outlet for cattle is vital to northern producers and exporters," she said.