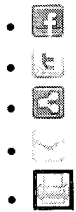


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Industry urges Egypt market to be merged into ESCAS



06 May 2013

Australian livestock exporters this morning announced proposals for major reforms to protect the welfare of animals following abhorrent abuses at Egyptian abattoirs revealed in videos last week.

The Australian Livestock Exporters Council, the Cattle Council of Australia and the National Farmers Federation issued a statement a few minutes ago saying the group had asked the Australian Government to absorb Egyptian trade into the unified Australia-wide Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS).

ESCAS is a standard that delivers monitoring and control over the welfare of Australian animals in their destination countries, ensuring all facilities meet international animal welfare standards.

A critical welfare feature of ESCAS is that the Australian animals will remain the responsibility of the Australian exporter, even after ownership has technically changed hands in foreign ports.

“We are convinced that these abuses by incompetent individuals can be more directly and effectively controlled under ESCAS, and Australian-led training programs will deliver improved welfare outcomes,” ALEC chief executive Alison Penfold said in this morning’s announcement.

“We share the concerns of all Australians on cruelty to animals and we are striving to improve global animal welfare,” she said.

“Our goal is zero deliberate animal welfare abuse of any kind, let alone the shocking practices in Egypt.”

Ms Penfold said ESCAS was capable of regulating the trade, was the only system of its type in the world, and would continue to evolve as animal welfare needs changed.

“We saw 18 months ago in Indonesia some horrible abuses that led to the introduction of ESCAS. Since then there has been vast improvements in welfare of Australian animals in Indonesia,” she said.

Through cooperation with local industry, the industry-funded Livestock Export Program had trained 1700 Indonesians in international standards in animals handling and slaughter practices.

“I understand that some passionately believe the only solution is to stop Australian live export. But if animal welfare is our goal, then Australia’s withdrawal from livestock export is not the answer: it will mean weaker global welfare standards for exported livestock,” Ms Penfold said.

“Australia is one of more than 100 live exporting nations. Our withdrawal from the market would quickly see our share absorbed by others who neither invest in animal welfare nor require the strict controls as we do.”

This morning’s statement said ALEC, CCA and NFF would collectively write to Minister Ludwig asking that Australia work with Egyptian officials to include Egypt in the ESCAS system.

“We are now focused on longer term solutions to improve standards, attitudes and behaviour of those involved in the care and handling of livestock,” Ms Penfold said.

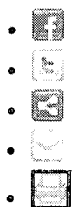
“Additionally and in order to deliver international welfare standards in the two facilities in Egypt, the Australian livestock export sector pledged to:

- Provide additional training for all feedlot and abattoir workers in OIE compliant animal handling and slaughter practices
- Place Animal Welfare Officers in the facilities
- Ensure that only suitably trained stock handlers or veterinarians undertake emergency slaughter of injured livestock
- Respond to any other initiatives that arise from the Australian Government’s own investigation into the cruelty.

“We believe these measures strengthen accountability and transparency to the Australian Government and the public, and provide the necessary level of oversight to ensure good animal welfare,” Ms Penfold said.

“If we are all committed to improving global animal welfare, then our involvement in markets is, and will have, a lasting impact of improving practices and attitudes.

“The Australian livestock export sector is distraught at the cruelty and abhorrent slaughter shown in the footage. We, like all Australians, don’t want to see this again, and will work tirelessly to avoid this,” she said.



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