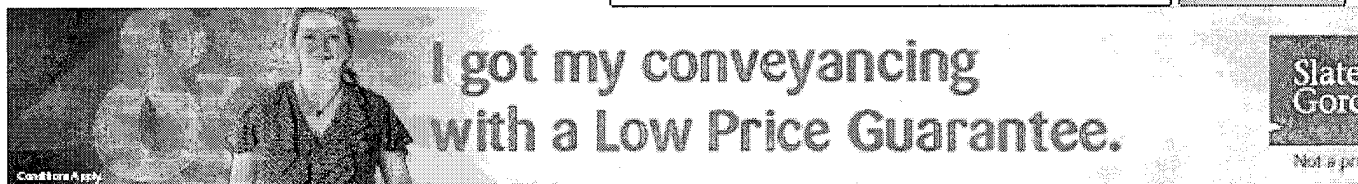


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Israel in livestock cruelty claims

Brad Thompson, The West Australian

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The future of Australia's live export industry is again under a cloud after Israeli workers were filmed cruelly abusing sheep and cattle at an abattoir just weeks after it was approved under the Federal Government's animal welfare guidelines.

The footage shows a worker at the Bakar Tnuva abattoir poking injured cattle in the eyes and genitals with an electric prodder. Sheep are beaten and thrown and a forklift is used to drag injured cattle out of a holding area.

The RSPCA said last night that the footage showed the Government's Exporter Supply Chain Assurance Scheme, introduced last year after a similar incident in Indonesia, was a failure.

It is understood the footage from Bakar Tnuva was filmed soon after an audit of the abattoir was commissioned by Elders International as part of the ESCAS approval process. The RSPCA claims the cattle in the footage were exported from Australia but it is unclear where the sheep came from.

Federal Department of Agriculture deputy secretary Phillip Glyde told the ABC, which showed the footage last night, that the cattle may have been from Australia.

The department is investigating the incidents, which are also the focus of an Israeli police inquiry.

RSPCA Australia chief scientist Bidda Jones said Australia should begin planning for a future without the "senseless" live export industry. "The fact that a facility like this, with such entrenched problems can pass an ESCAS audit casts a huge shadow over the entire supply chain assurance system," Dr Jones said.

The National Farmers Federation and other farming bodies condemned the actions of the Israeli workers, but said Australia led the world in trying to improve the treatment of animals in the live export trade.

"The abattoir has taken swift and decisive action, which has included the removal of the abattoir manager and other staff seen in the footage mistreating the animals," NFF president Jock Laurie said. "A facility like this casts a huge shadow over the supply chain assurance system." RSPCA's Bidda Jones

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