

Rudd helped cattle exports

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The livestock industry is singing Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd's praises, declaring that his intervention in the Indonesian live cattle export controversy was a critical circuit-breaker.

Mr Rudd last week flew to Jakarta for talks with senior Indonesian government ministers on the crisis. Within hours, Indonesia had declared it would grant permits to import 180,000 cattle in the next three months.

The move came one month after the Gillard government suspended live exports to Indonesia because of animal cruelty concerns at its abattoirs. It lifted the suspension on July 6 but needed Indonesia to issue fresh import permits before the trade could resume.

Meat and Livestock Australia chairman Don Heatley says Mr Rudd's skilled negotiations were instrumental in getting the \$320 million-a-year trade up and running again so quickly.

"Really, minister Rudd was the circuit-breaker in this whole process. We had pretty much stalled up until his involvement," Mr Heatley said today.

"We needed somebody within the Australian government at a different level to overcome some of the issues that sat between the two countries and the two agriculture ministers.

"Mr Rudd has stepped into that breach and done a lot of work that has overcome all these misconceptions about what each party wanted."

The foreign minister's engagement had given the industry clarity on the way forward, Mr Heatley said.

Mr Heatley said exports were now likely to resume within "weeks, not months".

His comments came a day after rural independent MP Bob Katter declared Mr Rudd had saved the industry.

"This thing had dragged on for five weeks and looked like it would drag on forever until he bought into it," Mr Katter said.

Mr Rudd's involvement in the talks came after widespread criticism of Agriculture Minister Bill Ludwig's handling of the matter.

But Mr Rudd on Monday said Senator Ludwig and Trade Minister Craig Emerson had made "good progress" on the issue before he travelled to Jakarta.

"We had not had, however, the reissue of import permits from the Indonesian side," Mr Rudd told ABC Radio. "I'm glad to record that the Indonesian government decided then to do that."

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