Live Sheep Export Industry: Past, Present & Future

Clean Green & Ethical?

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The livestock export program is jointly funded by the livestock exporters and producers of Australia
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Outline

• The Past
• The Present
• The Future
• Industry focus
  – In market
  – Communication
  – R & D
  – Relationships
• Industry relevance and role
• Clean and Green
• The ethical debate
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The Past

- Opportunistic market development
- Secondary to wool production
- Converted shipping
- Self regulation
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The Present

• Highly developed and specific markets
• Live trade specific breeding
• Purpose built livestock vessels
• Highly regulated at Commonwealth and State levels
• Only 4 serious live sheep exporters
• Relatively few importers but a serious investment in infrastructure
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The Future

Three strategic imperatives & two enabling strategies

Market access and development
Livestock management and welfare
Industry capability

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Industry Focus in market and domestic

- Technical Services
  - Education and training
  - Infrastructure
  - Market access

- Communication
  - Domestic focus proactive not reactive
  - In market
    - Product promotion
    - Handling and welfare

- R & D
  - Relevant and sound

- Building relationships
  - Government
  - Key stakeholder groups
  - Relevant welfare groups
In Market Representation - Bahrain

- Key focus of:
  - Market Development & Trade Support – access, promotion, support
  - Animal Handling and Management – heat stress, nutrition, water, facilities, restraining boxes
  - Animal Welfare – support and promote
  - Education & Training – discharge to slaughter
  - Research and Development – measurement and benchmarking
Projects - 2007/08

- Education and training and technical support
  - Vessel, discharge, feedlot, point of slaughter
- Acceptance and adoption of realistic regional animal welfare standards
- Market access and liaison across the region
  - political and commercial
- In–market measurements and benchmarks
  - facilities and management
- Program to involve shipboard vets and stockmen in animal handling standards and techniques - Aus

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Improving facilities
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Abattoir Design
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Major New Communications Campaign

- Targeting general community
- Targeting politicians

Rebuild confidence in live trade
The livestock export program is jointly funded by the livestock exporters and producers of Australia. This provides not only significant employment and business opportunities, but it is responsible for building families and communities together on their traditional homelands and instilling in them a sense of purpose and pride.

"If the trade was ever shut down for some reason, the impact on indigenous people in the Kimberley would be catastrophic," said Ned McCord, Business Co-ordinator with the Bunda Cattle Company.

Ned has been working in the pastoral industry for most of his life and fully appreciates the importance of the live export trade to the indigenous populations across northern Australia.

"It's not so much the financial impact that would hurt these people, it's the social and psychological affect. Having achieved so much, any closure of the trade would set some Aboriginal communities back many years," Ned said.

As Ned points out, the cattle industry in the Kimberley is now almost totally dependent on the live export trade. The nearest domestic market is more than 2600 kilometres away which means the closest market for cattle out of the Kimberley is the live trade to Malaysia and Indonesia.

When you consider that 30 of the 93 pastoral leases in the Kimberley are owned by Aboriginals, that these leases total 68,000 square kilometres and currently carry 400,000 head of cattle with capacity for more, you begin to realise the enormity of the potential problems to these Aboriginal pastoral community.

"Without the live export industry, these pastoral properties would have to shut down. The social and psychological consequences would be dramatic," said Ned, who is based at Brevone.

Ned estimates that around 500 Aboriginal people in the Kimberley alone are currently involved in the live export trade.

Married with three children, Ned spends a large portion of his time near Fitzroy Crossing, working for the Bunda Cattle Company which operates Leopold Downs and Fairfield Downs.

Ned is also a director of the Bunda Cattle Company, is a director with LiveCorp and a member of the research and development advisory committee for the national livestock export industry.

Ned's long and ongoing efforts to educate and assist others in developing skills that can be put to good use in the pastoral industry was led to his appointment to the Kimberley College of TAFE governance council.

Through his involvement with TAFE, Ned has derived great satisfaction in seeing many Aboriginal people gain accreditation in areas such as stock handling, horsemanship and workplace safety.

"And some of those who have been accredited are now running other people within their own communities," Ned said.

"There are people who are very passionate about the pastoral industry, the Bunda people are especially proud of what they have achieved. They operate a business carrying 10,000 head of cattle and turning over a reasonable profit, and they are not government-funded."

Overall, it's a financially successful business which also generates an enormous amount of community spirit and pride – something that the Australian live export industry is striving hard to encourage and protect.

Western Australia is currently playing an important role in the domestic and international livestock export industry. Rolando Dulmoccon, Ipagri and Renante Jandayan are in WA for three months, during which time they will be trained and educated on all aspects of animal handling, husbandry, health and welfare.

They are part of the second group of Filipino stockmen who have been brought to WA for the training program which is the initiative of Wellard Rural Exports and the state government.

Rolando, Ipagri and Renante are living in a house at Kemina, not far from the Wellard feedlot in Balding where they are receiving valuable training.

Wellard Managing Director Steve Meerveld said the Filipino stockmen had been selected for the three-month course based on their suitability, experience and commitment to the live export trade.

"Because these men spend so much time on the ships, by bringing them to Western Australia and allowing them to spend time on the ground working within various aspects of the industry, it provides them with a broader understanding of the entire supply chain," Steve said.

By working with staff at the feedlot, they learn about the most effective methods of handling animals, such as how to respond to certain stimuli without causing stress to either the animals or handlers.

The Filipino stockmen are also educated in assessing animals based on their weight, category, sex and health status, which provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary for identifying animals which may require additional attention during the journey.

Steve said the three men would undertake a LiveCorp-MLA accredited training course and during their stay would meet with representatives from the RSPCA and the Department of Agriculture.

Pride and purpose

Valuable WA experience for Filipino stockmen

Livestock industries ... WA is leading the way
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Maintaining Community Support

• Strategy in place to counter animal activists
• A united industry response
• Overseen by Chairs Group
• Elevated to a whole-of-rural industry issue
Research & Development

• Major achievements 2006 – 2007
  – Investigating causes of mortality in sheep exports
  – Developing welfare measures for cattle and sheep on ship
  – Production of yard manual for overseas abattoirs
  – Literature review of stocking densities on ship
  – Developing “Is it fit to export” guide
  – Ongoing development of heat stress computer modeling
  – Identifying knowledge gaps and areas of further research for the LEI
Project areas for 2007-2008

Livestock Management and Welfare:
• Inanition on sheep exports,
• Animal husbandry in Middle East feedlots and abattoirs,
• Qualitative behavioural assessment,
• Curfews,
• Metabolic regulation of heat stress,
• Benefits of good stockmanship,
• Supplementation to reduce morbidity – feed additives and pre-shipment vaccination.
Industry relevance and role

• Complex religious, cultural, social and commercial drivers create market for live animals
  – meeting the market
• Chilled and frozen
  – complementary to “fresh” (hot)
  – not substitutes
• Global welfare implications
  – “Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock” vs NIL
• Economic / welfare
  – Domestically
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Australia Has the Highest Standards for Livestock Exports

• Independent report from 2006 stated: “The benchmarking process revealed that Australia has world-best livestock export standards in terms of coverage and capacity to deliver acceptable outcomes.”

• 16 countries compared. The report compared Australian standards of animal care with our trading competitors, including South America, Mexico, some African countries, the United States, Canada and New Zealand.

• Australia has extensive standards from on-farm selection to discharge from the vessel in importing country.

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- Australia has the strictest rules for livestock vessels in the world. Vessels no longer suitable from Australia ship from locations with reduced standards.

- Between 250-300 shipments per year from Australia.

- Major investment into vessels occurring two by June 2008 - $100M – 6,000 cattle. Another by 2010 - $100M – 90,000 sheep.
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World Trade in Live Sheep

FOR EXAMPLE

- Uruguay to Saudi and Jordan
- Russia to Jordan & Lebanon
- China to Kuwait & Jordan
- Argentina to Saudi
- Romania to Syria, Saudi, Jordan & Libya

>1.5 million / year

Millions of sheep each year are exported from Africa to the Middle East. Neither the exporting country nor the importing country have ANY standards on animal welfare.
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Improving delivery rates

Livestock Delivery Rates 1996 - 2006

- Cattle
- Sheep
- Goats
Clean and Green

• The Idea
  – quality and consumer image of Australian sheep

• The Reality
  – MOU animal health status

• The Validation
  - disease issues-Cormo
  - contamination/residues issues-Victoria
  - growth promotants
The ethical debate

• Stakeholder groups
  – the animals
  – producers and other operatives
  – Australian public
  – Consumers

• Positive and negative aspects
  – Relevant to position adopted

Ethical sustainability