

BORN IN BUNBURY.

KILLED IN KUWAIT.



An open letter to all West Australians who care about the welfare of animals.

Over the past three decades Australia's live export industry has exported over 250 million animals to the Middle East. At least 75% of these animals were born on West Australian farms under the protection of West Australian laws.

Animals Australia investigators recently returned from the Middle East after documenting the brutal treatment of Australian sheep during the Festival of Sacrifice. In Kuwait, the largest destination of Australian sheep, sheep were being purchased, trussed with wire, shoved into boots and appallingly slaughtered in the streets.

The ABC's *7.30 Report* featured the outcomes of Animals Australia's investigation — including interviews with Animals Australia investigator Lyn White, HRH Princess Alia bint al Hussein of Jordan and Meat and Livestock Australia's Michael Finucan. The vast majority of these animals were from WA so this segment is critical viewing for all West Australians. It can be viewed online at www.animalsaustralia.org/730-report

The live export industry says that 'we care' about animal welfare. Could they have prevented this?

Animals Australia formally wrote to MLA, LiveCorp and the Australian Livestock Exporters' Council imploring them to take action to reduce the risks posed to Australian animals during such festivals by ensuring that animals were not on sold to individual buyers — an outcome that they could legitimately achieve through exporter/importer agreements. Despite this proposal having the support of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA, and being an obvious initiative if the welfare of exported animals was a priority, it was not acted upon.

As a result thousands of Australian sheep were subjected to cruel and unacceptable treatment during the recent Festival of Sacrifice. The routine and widespread brutal treatment of Australian sheep in Kuwait documented by Animals Australia was acknowledged by MLA as 'appalling' yet they have knowingly and willingly supplied animals to Kuwait for this festival for decades.

What of MLA/LiveCorp's education programs in the Middle East?

Animals Australia's investigators also travelled to Bahrain and Qatar to observe

MLA's 'in the ute, not the boot' program at importer's feedlots — lauded as successful by the live export industry last year. In Bahrain, truckloads of sheep were observed being transported to other nearby markets where buyers were loading them into boots. In Qatar, terrified Australian sheep were witnessed being put in the back seats of vehicles. Rather than acting to protect Australian sheep from being subjected to the stresses and cruelty of street and private slaughter — these education programs are actively encouraging and facilitating the purchase of Australian sheep by individual buyers.

But do Australian animals only suffer during this 3 day festival?

Whilst the Festival of Sacrifice is the peak time of animal suffering in the Middle East, Australian animals are on sold from feedlots and market places all year round. Those killed in abattoirs are also slaughtered in a way that is unacceptable in Australia.

But MLA/LiveCorp tell us that they are improving things

And they undoubtedly will seek to counter this open letter by claiming their 'successes'. So please consider the following...

Animals Australia's footage reveals the widespread and brutal treatment of Australian sheep by Kuwaitis during the Festival of Sacrifice despite Australia's live export industry exporting to that country for decades.

MLA state that the majority of Australian livestock are humanely processed in abattoirs in the Middle East. However, in abattoirs throughout the region, (with the exception of Jordan where Animals Australia has been working) Australian animals have their throats cut whilst fully conscious. This is not a practice deemed humane by animal welfare scientists, nor deemed acceptable by the Australian community. Even with a skilled throat cut cattle can remain conscious of what they are enduring for up to 2 minutes and sheep for up to 20 seconds — suffering unnecessary pain and terror.

The live export industry continues to actively expand its export markets into countries where no legislation exists to protect animals from cruelty. This shows that its motivation is not animal welfare but increasing profits.

The facts speak for themselves. You cannot state you oppose animal cruelty whilst you are supplying animals to be cruelly treated. You cannot impress on nations the importance of animal welfare when the example your industry sets is that it is acceptable to send animals halfway around the world to be slaughtered and for tens of thousands of animals to die enroute.

Importantly, an unsubstantiated claim about an ability to create change in the future, can never justify supplying animals to suffer in the present — nor does it excuse the industry's culpability in the many millions of animals that have suffered and died over the past three decades.

But isn't the live trade of critical importance to Australia's economy?

Last year, Australia's chilled and frozen meat trade to the Middle East was worth around 40 million dollars more than live exports to the region and is growing significantly each year. Some 4.2 million 'sheep' were accepted in carcass form showing the willingness of the Middle East to accept chilled imports. When Bahrain was unable to import enough live Australian sheep due to drought, it increased its imports of Australian chilled meat. There is no obvious alternative supply of live animals of the type, size and price required by importing nations to replace Australian livestock. The true potential of Australian chilled meat exports to the region will never be known whilst Australia is prepared to supply live animals.

If the welfare of animals is of concern to you, please take a moment to watch 7.30 Report (animalsaustralia.org/730-report) and decide for yourself. The treatment of West Australian sheep documented by Animals Australia in Kuwait will inevitably be repeated next year if they continue to be supplied to this fate.

▼ IMAGES TAKEN BY ANIMALS AUSTRALIA INVESTIGATORS, KUWAIT NOVEMBER 2010



Animals Australia
the voice for animals

For further photos, investigation footage and information visit www.AnimalsAustralia.org