Vietnam Live Export Cruelty Investigation 2016
Sledge-hammering to death of Australian cattle in Vietnam continues

Animals Australia investigators have again documented Australian cattle being horrifically sledge-hammered to death in an abattoir in Hanoi. Investigators also documented Australian cattle present in 6 traditional slaughterhouses in a notorious slaughter village 30 kms from Hanoi where sledge-hammering and water-forcing practices occur.

Industry sources state that tens of thousands of Australian cattle annually are exiting approved supply chains either to China or to traditional slaughterhouses in Vietnam.

30,000 Australian breeding and dairy cattle have also been exported to Vietnam over the past 12 months. These animals have no legal protection from sledge-hammering.

The regulatory and traceability system in Vietnam has been corrupted

Ear tags are being scanned, removed and reconciliations falsified. The Department of Agriculture’s (DA) own reports show awareness that the regulatory system has been corrupted.

Before the DA approves export permits they need to be reasonably satisfied that animals will be treated in accordance with regulations. In light of ongoing reports of animals leaving supply chains in Vietnam, showing CCTV & traceability systems have been corrupted and undermined – it should be impossible for DA to reach this level of satisfaction.

Australian cattle were last year found in Guangzhou, China, despite these cattle being accounted for in reconciliation reports from Vietnam, showing reports had been falsified.

The investigation report into the cattle Animals Australia previously documented (May 2015) being sledge-hammered to death in a non-approved abattoir revealed that the exporters had told DA that these animals had left their own supply chain, but had been killed at another approved abattoir. Details that were clearly false.

Failure to appropriately sanction export companies is leading to cruelty

Since live export regulations ESCAS (Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System) were introduced in 2011 not one export company has been prosecuted or had their export licence suspended, despite ongoing widespread breaches resulting in shocking cruelty in numerous importing countries.

Exporters have been given no reason to take their responsibilities seriously, and know that Agriculture Minister, Barnaby Joyce, will protect their interests no matter what issues arise.

Exporters are aware of the extent of regulatory breaches in Vietnam and the ongoing illegal trucking of Australian cattle to China – but are failing to report this to DA.

Industry claims re: CCTV and improvements

Out of the 7 exporters to Vietnam, only 3 are using the Big Brother CCTV system which is monitored in Jakarta. All other exporters ‘self-monitor’. Industry informants state that CCTV cameras are not being turned on, and that exporter Supply Chain Officers are directly involved in the corruption of the ESCAS traceability system.

Over 120 abattoirs (mostly small) have been accredited to kill Australian cattle despite the inability to have any level of proper oversight of nightly activities. Evidence gathered shows that
captive bolt killing devices provided by exporters are being misused, resulting in further suffering and abuse, including animals being butchered whilst still alive. These devices need to be used with absolute expertise and precision to kill animals humanely.

Australian cattle are also being killed in ESCAS-approved abattoirs that have no hygiene protocols in place. Processing is occurring on the floor in filthy conditions which could place human health at risk. Meat processed in such conditions would be deemed unfit for human consumption in Australia.

How do we know they are Australian animals observed?

- Breeds which are unique to Australian cattle exported to Vietnam.
- Verbal admissions from abattoir operators in Vietnamese that have been translated.
- Presence of National Livestock Identification System (‘NLIS’) buttons (unique to Australia).
- Round holes in ears unique to NLIS tags that have been removed to circumvent system.
- Ear notching (shapes cut out of ears) that are unique to Australian cattle.
- Australian cattle industry expert confirmed origin of animals to be Australian.

VIETNAM 2016 | INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

What the Animals Australia 2016 investigation documented:

- That Australian cattle are being sledge-hammered to death nightly in an abattoir in Hanoi (five deaths documented).
- Australian cattle in 6 non-approved abattoirs in notorious slaughter village Bai Do (where sledge-hammering and water-forcing are prevalent).
- Australian cattle in four other non-approved abattoirs.
- Australian cattle being incorrectly stunned (in both approved and non-approved abattoirs) with Australian supplied captive bolt devices, with the butchering process commencing whilst the animals are still alive and conscious.
- The routine removal of ear tags so animals cannot be linked back to the exporter legally responsible for them.
- Animals being cruelly killed and butchered in both approved and non-approved slaughterhouses in filthy, unhygienic conditions.
- Recorded admissions from slaughterhouse owners indicating their willingness to illegally supply Australian cattle to unapproved slaughterhouses.
- Australian animals in pre-slaughter pens being repeatedly whipped in the face, and on the head and body by abattoir workers.

The evidence, coupled with inside industry information, indicates the number of Australian cattle exiting approved supply chains in Vietnam to be in the tens of thousands.

Additionally relevant is that the Department last week (9/6/16) released the investigation report into Animals Australia’s evidence of sledge-hammering from May 2015.

They found that the animals sledge-hammered at the facility reported by Animals Australia had been part of a consignment that the exporter (ILE) said had left their approved supply chain but had been slaughtered at another approved supply chain.
BACKGROUND BRIEF – VIETNAM LIVE EXPORT CRUELTY

This has been an exporter pattern of behaviour. If animals disappear they tell DA they were killed in another supply chain. This investigation outcome shows that what the exporters are saying in such circumstances cannot be trusted – that animals are instead ending up in slaughterhouses that subject animals to sledge-hammering (a common traditional method in Vietnam).

VIETNAM | MARKET INFORMATION

In the last two years, over half a million Australian cattle have been exported to Vietnam. In 2016, 20,000 to 30,000 are being exported to Vietnam each month.

At least 29 feedlots and around 120 abattoirs have been ESCAS-approved in Vietnam – the most of any importing country – despite the absence of local animal protection laws and slaughter regulations.

There are 7 Australian exporters to Vietnam competing for market share:

- Frontier International Northern Pty Ltd
- International Livestock Exports Pty Ltd
- North Australian Cattle Company Pty Ltd
- South East Asian Livestock Services Pty Ltd
- Wellard Rural Exports Pty Ltd
- Austrex (Australian Rural Exports)
- Livestock Shipping Services

Sledge-hammering and water-forcing are traditional slaughter practices in Vietnam [Note: Water-forcing (or ‘flooding’) involves forcing a hose down the throat into the stomach of cattle forcing them to consume large quantities of water in the hours preceding slaughter, to illegally increase meat weight].

Cruelty and corruption have long been endemic in Vietnamese slaughterhouses. This is the environment that the Australian industry ‘flooded’ with hundreds of thousands of cattle.

Whilst exporters installed restraint and stunning equipment in approved abattoirs, there is no ongoing oversight to ensure that equipment is used humanely and correctly (a stunner is simply a weapon in the wrong hands). An industry informant speaks to wire being stabbed into the brain of cattle that have been incorrectly stunned in an attempt to kill them.

In addition, thousands of Australian cattle have been sold outside of approved supply chains to be subjected to the traditional slaughter practices of sledge-hammering and flooding.

VIETNAM | 3 YEARS OF PROBLEMS

The live export industry first admitted awareness of Australian cattle being sledge-hammered to death in Vietnam in June 2013 (after a member of the public provided videos to the DA). Since then, a further 19 reports of recurring live export breaches have been brought to the government’s attention, including Animals Australia’s evidence of sledge-hammering in May 2015 and June 2016.

Government reports reveal admissions of over 4,000 exported cattle and buffalo exposed to the risk of the widespread and routine practices of sledge-hammering and flooding in Vietnam, although industry informants attest to this number being much higher – in the tens of thousands.
This lower figure primarily comes from industry ‘self-reports’ which occur when they have reason to fear third-party reports. Exporters are also aware that ‘self-reports’ are ‘rewarded’ by DA with a minimal regulatory response.

Self-reports are likely to represent a small proportion of the real number of animals leaving supply chains. Industry insiders state tens of thousands of exported animals are either being illegally trucked into China to traditional slaughter practices, or traditionally killed in non-approved slaughterhouses in Vietnam. Despite broad industry awareness of the scale of non-compliance, associated repercussions for animals, and that the market is over-supplied which increases risks – live exporters have continued to export high numbers of cattle into Vietnam.

**Supply chain breaches have been recurring in Vietnam – both in the North and the South – since exports under ESCAS regulations began in 2013.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breach Report Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>Wellard</td>
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<td>Feb 2014</td>
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<td>March 2014</td>
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<td>June 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2016</td>
<td>Investigation not complete</td>
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In its investigation reports, the DA provides a sanitised version of what is happening in Vietnam. They refer to ‘adverse animal welfare outcomes’ which, in effect, means the sledge-hammering of animals to death.

DA has a catalogue of evidence that ESCAS is being corrupted and circumvented in Vietnam, yet the only major action the Department has taken is to remove particular supply chains from ESCAS approval. Exports to known problematic regions have continued unabated.

**Example 1 – failure to report sledge-hammering immediately & no action taken**

In May and June 2015, Meat and Livestock Australia representatives found Australian cattle in a non-approved abattoir on two separate visits. There was no infrastructure in this abattoir, no restraining box, probable roping slaughter taking place – and they viewed a sledgehammer on site. MLA didn’t report this to DA until after their second visit in June. The cattle present had NLIS ear tags, identifying them as Australian.
No exporter reported to DA that animals were missing from their supply chains, revealing the failure of traceability and reconciliation systems.

Incredibly, the DA report states that no action was taken re this abattoir due to not being able to identify the exporter responsible – effectively ensuring that Australian cattle would continue to be supplied and sledge-hammered at this facility.

**Example 2 – no control over importers and where animals are going**

In March 2015, 1,013 cattle were moved outside the responsible exporter’s supply chains (Austrex). That same month, 882 cattle were moved outside ILE’s approved supply chains; and 130 buffalo were illegally moved outside SEALS’ approved supply chains. These examples show exporters have no control over their importers or where animals are ending up. These represent serious breaches of ESCAS and all of these exporters are repeat offenders, yet they continue to be permitted to export to Vietnam.

**Example 3 – removal of ear tags and deliberate circumvention of the system**

In August 2015, Australian cattle were found in an abattoir in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, Southern China. They had been illegally trucked across the border from Vietnam. The exporter responsible was Frontier. Critically, the ear tags in the ears of the animals had been removed (after being scanned in Vietnam), which meant Frontier’s reconciliation lists did not reflect the missing animals, exposing serious deficiencies in oversight and traceability, and deliberate circumvention of the traceability system.

As the regulator – the Secretary of the DA should only approve exports to another country if he can be reasonably satisfied that animals will be treated in accordance with ESCAS requirements.

It should be impossible for the Secretary to reach an acceptable level of ‘satisfaction’ in the face of ongoing evidence that ESCAS (including additional traceability requirements implemented late last year) is being deliberately circumvented and corrupted by the removal and scanning of ear tags in order to falsify reconciliations.

**SLEDGE-HAMMERING | EXPORTERS IN DAMAGE CONTROL INTRODUCE ‘6 POINT PLAN’**

In response to Animals Australia presenting DA with evidence of sledge-hammering cattle in May 2015, the industry announced a 6 Point Plan to address ‘leakage’ of cattle outside approved supply chains. The cornerstone of this plan was the introduction and monitoring of CCTV cameras in all approved facilities.

At the time, rather than making the horrific footage public, Animals Australia and RSPCA Australia met with the Australian Live Exporter’s Council (ALEC) to table the additional measures needed to reduce risks to Australian cattle – including that DA be given a portal into the CCTV system, and an independent auditor appointed by the groups be allowed access to facilities in Vietnam. ALEC promised to respond within 6 weeks. One year on, and we are still waiting...

That animals continue to be illegally sold from approved supply chains shows that CCTV (if present) is being deliberately circumvented.

In October 2015, the Government required further audits and a higher level of traceability for Vietnam supply chains by 31 December 2015; despite this, already in 2016 there have been a further 4 reports of cattle being moved out of supply chains there including, most recently, Animals Australia’s evidence of the systemic corruption of traceability systems in Vietnam.
LIVE EXPORT TO VIETNAM IS COSTING AUSTRALIAN JOBS

This is the first human welfare impact of live export. Meat processors are competing with live exporters for the purchase of cattle in states such as Queensland – a major contributor to the Vietnamese trade. This has led to extended abattoir closures in Queensland (workers not having jobs for months) and reduced shifts due to not being able to access cattle. Job losses and reduced shifts are impacting on entire communities.

At the same time as meat processors have been unable to purchase cattle in Australia, exporters have flooded the Vietnam market, creating an over-supply of cattle and increasing risks of regulatory breaches (through on-selling to China and non-approved facilities) and cruelty.

AUSTRALIA’S APPROVED ABATTOIRS IN VIETNAM PLACE HUMAN HEALTH AT RISK

The majority of the 120 approved abattoirs in Vietnam have no basic hygiene protocols, and kill and process animals (often on the floor) in filthy, bacteria-filled conditions. Meat killed and processed under such conditions would be deemed unfit for human consumption in Australia.

Workers have been witnessed smoking and spitting while on the processing floor. Stray dogs and birds have also been witnessed frequenting kill floors during slaughter and processing.

In addition, there are no OH&S protocols in Vietnam for slaughterhouse workers.

BREEDING AND DAIRY CATTLE EXPORTED TO VIETNAM HAVE NO REGULATORY PROTECTION

In 2015, just under 30,000 Australian breeding and dairy cattle were exported to Vietnam. ESCAS does not cover these categories of animals, which means that they can – and are – being killed at traditional abattoirs, and are being subjected to sledge-hammering and flooding (tubes down throat into stomach to fill with water to illegally increase meat weight).

Along with the corruption of the regulatory system for slaughter animals, and lack of hygiene protocols, the supply of breeding/dairy cattle to be housed and killed under any circumstances in Vietnam (and other exporting countries) reveals the live export industry to be one that doesn’t care about human or animal welfare.

LIVE EXPORT | A REGULATORY SYSTEM IN DISARRAY

The Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) was introduced in the ‘fall-out’ from Indonesia in 2011, to stop Australian exported livestock from being subjected to brutal practices. It makes Australian exporters legally responsible for keeping animals within approved supply chains.

Despite individual export companies being responsible for recurring breaches of ESCAS over the past 4 years – resulting in shocking cruelty – not one live export company has faced prosecution or had their export licence suspended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Reports</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Recurring breaches since 2013. Official reports of at least 4,043 cattle and buffalo exiting supply chains, at risk of sledge-hammering and/or other cruel handling/slaughter practices. Industry insiders estimate the actual number to be in the tens of thousands of animals. News stories cite the oversupply of cattle into the market, exacerbating risks. 20,000-30,000 cattle exported to Vietnam each month in 2016.</td>
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Israel | 17 | Breaches inside the 2 major abattoirs, during unloading at ports, and illegal transfers of cattle into Gaza.

Indonesia | 14 | DA still investigating numerous breaches dating back to 2014. Breaches inside abattoirs and cattle moved outside supply chains.

Kuwait | 13 | Sheep illegally sold out of the approved supply chain and killed in the same livestock market throughout 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.


Gaza | 9 | Horrific abuse of Australian cattle in approved abattoir and on the streets throughout 2014 and over two consecutive Eid al Adha's (Festival of Sacrifice).

Jordan | 7 | Recurring breaches from 2013 – 2015 with sheep sold and killed outside supply chains.

Thailand | 5 | Recurring breaches since 2015 with cattle moved outside supply chains. Sledge-hammering practiced in Thailand.

Oman | 5 | Sheep sold and killed outside approved supply chains.

UAE | 4 | Sheep sold and killed outside approved supply chains.

Mauritius | 2 | Cattle sold and killed outside approved supply chains.

Pakistan | 2 | Massacre of 22,000 sheep by authorities in 2012. DA still investigating falsification of documents of export company employee which led to this consignment being offloaded in Pakistan. Despite damning evidence, no prosecution has been announced.

Turkey | 2 | One report related to individual tethering of cattle, another involving cattle moved outside supply chain, with investigation continuing.

Qatar | 1 | Neglect and starvation of dairy cattle and 7,000 ‘breeder’ sheep exported to Qatar. Breeding animals are not covered by ESCAS.

Egypt | 1 | Shocking slaughter and abuse of cattle inside approved abattoirs.

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NOTE: DA only lists 103 reports on its website due to noting only 2 complaints for Gaza and 13 for Israel. But the actual number is 9 for Gaza and 17 for Israel (4 relating to illegal transfer of cattle across the border from Israel into Gaza).

NOTE: ‘Complainants’ above include Animals Australia (46 complaints), Exporter self-reports (42), the RSPCA (2), and industry and third-party reports.

LIVE EXPORT | A CATALOGUE OF CRIMES SPANNING 30 YEARS

One cannot properly consider the culpability of the industry in Vietnam without reflecting on its history. Prior to the ESCAS regulations being put in place in 2011, live exporters had, for decades, been supplying animals to over a dozen countries in full knowledge of the brutal treatment they would be subjected to. Live exporters have a catalogue of crimes they still have not answered to.

Exporters willingly supplied cattle to Egypt, where they knew tendon slashing was routine; to Gaza, where there is no infrastructure to facilitate humane slaughter; to Indonesia, where brutal roping slaughter was commonplace; and to Vietnam, where sledge-hammering and flooding is common practice in abattoirs. Over 6,000 Australian cattle in fact were sent to roping slaughter and to be sledge-hammered to death – the common slaughter methods in Vietnam – in the years preceding ESCAS.

Consider too that after being exposed for sending millions of cattle to roping slaughter and to Australian-designed cruel restraint boxes - now outlawed) in Indonesia, the industry then chose
to make Vietnam its largest live export market – a country where there are only a handful of government-run abattoirs, and where water-forcing, sledge-hammering and roping slaughter is routine.

Exporters are aware that the system is being corrupted in Vietnam, they are aware of the horrific consequences for Australian cattle as a result, and yet they are still flooding the Vietnam market with cattle from Australian properties.

Some 311,523 Australian cattle were exported to Vietnam for slaughter in 2015.

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