Animals International live export investigation

Investigation into the treatment of animals exported live from Brazil to Egypt and Lebanon — 2017

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

It is a universally-accepted scientific principle that animals should be slaughtered as close to the farm gate as possible to reduce unavoidable stress and suffering inherent to long distance transport. This is why a growing number of animal health and welfare professionals are opposed to live animal export.

Brazil currently exports tens of thousands of cattle to Egypt and the Middle East to be slaughtered each year, with the trade projected to grow significantly. This shipboard journey of up to 30 days occurs without animals having access to a veterinarian – despite the many and varied welfare risks and impacts to animals transported by sea.

Brazilian cattle are being exported to countries with appalling animal cruelty records; where there are no local handling and slaughter standards to ensure humane treatment; and, where barbaric practices such as tendon slashing and hoisting are still routine.

This document outlines the impact of live export on animals; the regulatory failures systemic to the trade; how the trade breaches international guidelines; as well as the viable economic alternative.

1. Sea transport is inherently risky

The primary risk for cattle during lengthy sea journeys is trauma injuries due to rough seas and pneumonia or bovine respiratory disease. On long haul voyages the build-up of wet faeces on live export ships can lead to cattle becoming coated in excrement. Apart from being distressing and unhygienic, faecal-coated cattle cannot dispel heat through their body surface and are at greater risk of heat stress, which can be fatal. Sheep most commonly suffer and die from heat stress, illness, injury or starvation from failing to eat the unfamiliar pelleted food on board.

2. Cruel treatment and slaughter in importing countries

Over the past decade, Animals International has conducted over 50 investigations throughout the Middle East, North Africa and South East Asia revealing the brutal handling and slaughter of animals once they arrive in importing countries. In most of
these countries, including those Brazil has earmarked as future export destinations, there are no laws in place to protect animals from extreme cruelty.

In Brazil, cattle are stunned unconscious before slaughter due to humane slaughter legislation. However this is not the case in most importing countries, all animals exported from Brazil suffer prolonged and painful fully-conscious slaughter. In 2017 Animals International documented the handling and slaughter of Brazilian animals in Lebanon and Egypt. In Lebanon, attempts to restrain fearful animals routinely led to terrible treatment like eye gouging and tail twisting. In Egypt, Brazilian bulls were stabbed in the face and eyes, and slashed in their leg tendons in attempts to bring them to the ground to have their throats cut. Such horrific treatment is routine in Egypt.

3. Regulatory failures during transport and lack of veterinary oversight

The endorsement of long distance transport of livestock by sea, despite all the known animal welfare repercussions, sets an appalling example to countries still to accept a societal and government responsibility to protect animals from harm.

The OIE’s (World Organization for Animal Health) Terrestrial Animal Health Code sets out clear standards regarding exporters’ responsibilities relating to rest periods, stocking densities and provision of food and water. Given that there is no regulatory oversight whatsoever to ensure compliance or the welfare of animals, severe breaches are likely be occurring on these trips, as have been documented on live export ships from Australia and Europe.

There is no requirement for a veterinarian to accompany animals despite thousands of animals being crammed into ships and then isolated out at sea. This means that sick and injured animals have no access to veterinary care for the duration of the trip -- up to 26 days from South America -- nor is there any expert oversight or management of disease risks.

No official records are kept of injuries, sickness or mortalities of animals that occur during journeys from Brazil. Most live export vessels are more than 40 years old, were not purpose-built livestock vessels and fail to meet appropriate infrastructure and welfare standards.

4. Brazil’s live export trade breaches international welfare standards

Brazil is a member of the OIE and is therefore a signatory to its animal welfare standards and is obligated to ensure compliance with those standards. Despite the relevant ministries being aware of the extreme cruelty exported animals are routinely subjected to, Brazil has made no moves to implement appropriate measures to protect animals from terrible abuse.
By facilitating and supplying live animals to countries where the majority of abattoirs have no capacity to handle or slaughter animals humanely, Brazil is undermining the work of the OIE to improve animal welfare standards globally.

Compliance with OIE standards is intended to form the basis of trade agreements between countries, but Brazil’s trade with Egypt and Lebanon fails to comply with OIE welfare standards both during transport and at the time of slaughter.

The World Veterinary Association has called for greater adherence to ‘globally accepted standards’ to reduce the ‘significant animal welfare risks as millions of live animals are transported each year.

5. **Animals are being killed in slaughterhouses with no hygiene protocols**

Live animal export is putting both human and animal welfare at risk. Most abattoirs in importing countries have no hygiene protocols and meat processed in this environment would be deemed unfit for human consumption in Brazil, which is known for its excellent hygiene standards.

6. **There is no economic imperative for live export – it is needless cruelty**

Brazil is the world’s second biggest exporter of boxed beef, the vast majority of which is sold to Hong Kong (21%), Egypt (14%), the Russian Federation (13%) and the European Union (9%). In 2015, the boxed beef trade was worth US $5.9 billion and the live cattle trade yielded US $210 million, with cattle exports representing 0.24% of total agricultural exports.
Who is Animals International?

Animals International is the global arm of Animals Australia, Australia’s leading animal advocacy organisation.

Recognised internationally for strategic public awareness campaigning, our ground-breaking investigations have spanned 16 countries and influenced much needed change, including industry and regulatory reform. Our investigations into the global live animal export trade have revealed the suffering of animals exported to the Middle East and Asia from Australia, South America and Europe, sparking public and political concern about this global trade.

MEDIA DOWNLOADS | Video and images:


MEDIA CONTACTS:

- **Luis C. Sarmiento M.** Animals International Latin American Director
  lcsarmiento@animalsinternational.org | +57 320 4884404

- **Lisa Chalk** Animals Australia Director of Campaigns
  lisa.chalk@animalsaustralia.org | +61 488 006 478