

NSPCA lobbies against live exports

Proponents of the practice of live export by sea may argue in its defence that South Africa needs the jobs created by the industry. However, it is rather the case that if the practice was terminated, more jobs could be created in South Africa's meat-processing industry. Furthermore, most jobs that were created by the live export industry would continue without it.



One suggested alternative to the live export industry is the exportation of fresh meat, which would retain an increased measure of certainty to both the exporter and the importer. This has already been shown to be a more economically viable method; last year in Australia alone, boxed lamb exports to the Middle East jumped 50% to become worth US\$60 million more than live sheep exports to that region.

"The establishment of local slaughter houses will improve the local economy and we already have the available infrastructure. In instances where the meat is exported to Muslim-majority countries, we can develop slaughter houses to ensure that halaal slaughter standards are adhered to, which are humane and clean, as prescribed by Islam," says veterinarian, Dr. Ayoub Banderker (BVMCh).

An unhealthy, inhumane practice

As the practice now stands, farmed animals, such as cattle, sheep and goats, that are bought in South Africa, are then trucked to East London and loaded onto a ship bound for a purchasing country, most often Mauritius. The loading process, which involves goading animals off the trucks onto the ship, can take up to 24 hours.

"Live export at sea is not a responsible form of trade in a progressive country. It is neither an economically sound business practice nor does it take the welfare of the animal into consideration," says Andries Venter, the manager of the Farm Animal Protection Unit at the NSPCA. "Humane handling and slaughter of animals in South Africa is regulated. However this is not the case in Mauritius, where most animals will be slaughtered while fully conscious."

Stored correctly, exported meat, a method supported by NSPCA, is less prone to contamination than live animals are to disease. Live animals transported at sea are held below deck and, depending on the weather and sea conditions, face a

journey of between seven to 12 days. In this time, animals risk disease, starvation, rotting at the sites of open wounds, crushing, and death; all rendering the animal poor or unfit for human consumption.

"When live animals are transported over long distances, the risks of spreading contagious diseases, such as foot and mouth, increase dramatically. These diseases can have a huge negative economic impact on the country in which the contagious disease is found," says Dr Banderker.

NSPCA efforts

It is believed that a ship destined for Mauritius is due to be loaded with cattle in August 2013. The NSPCA has announced that they will lay criminal charges against any veterinarian, whether state appointed or not, who continues to sign live export permits. This is in accordance with the Animal Protection Act, No. 71 of 1962 (APA) which makes it an offense for a person to allow the 'unnecessary suffering' of an animal.

The NSPCA is currently lobbying the Department of Tourism, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), Border Control, and other relevant authorities.

The NSPCA has monitored shipments over the past two decades, with the last shipment in September 2012 resulting in court action between the NSPCA and the exporters in East London. The NSPCA stance has previously been conveyed in writing as well as in discussions with the DAFF.

For more information, go to www.nspca.co.za/Page/30522/Ships-of-Shame.

To support the campaign and send a personalised email message to the representatives in authority at the DAFF, go to <http://goo.gl/sKjqH>.

An SMS supporting the NSPCA initiative can be sent to 38018 with the key words 'STOP SHIP'. Each SMS is charged at R10.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>