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EVALUATION OF 2006 MIDDLE EAST LIVE EXPORT INVESTIGATION FOOTAGE

I have viewed the DVD entitled Australian Live Export to the Middle East in 2006. I make the following observations and comments

Overview

I am an associate professor of animal science at Colorado State University, and have extensive experience in consulting and advising on large animal slaughter practices throughout the world. I have designed the equipment that is used at many large processing plants worldwide.

I have reviewed the footage of handling and slaughter practices used for Australian sheep and cattle live exported to Oman, Egypt and Kuwait. The abusive treatment shown unquestionably must cause great suffering, pain and distress.

The slaughterers demonstrate a complete disregard for the welfare of the animals being transported and killed, stabbing and poking at the eyes and slashing the leg tendons of cattle to be slaughtered, forcing cattle to fall backwards off the raised beds of trucks, and in one case beating a blindfolded cow towards slaughter with a metal pole.

Sheep are dragged by their ears and horns to slaughter, kicked in the face, crammed into car trunks to be driven to backyard slaughter and forced to jump from raised trucks to slippery slaughterhouse floors. Basic welfare considerations and handling improvements could eliminate the stress and discomfort caused to the animals through such practices, but no effort is made to ensure the sheep and cattle are treated humanely before slaughter.

Some of the slaughterers had blunt knives and slaughter methods were poor. If religious slaughter is going to be done without stunning, a very sharp knife in the hands of a skilled person must be used. In addition, to allow for the fact that Australian animals are less docile and less easily handled and subdued than local animals, to ensure slaughter is as humane as possible these slaughterhouses must install a race and conveyor system similar to that used in Australian plants, which would minimise the animals' suffering.

Egypt

The Australian industry holds up the Bassatin slaughterhouse seen in this footage as a model example of how it is improving welfare in the Middle East – instead this footage shows that cattle slaughtered here have a range of abuses and cruelties inflicted upon them, such as being forced to fall backwards off trucks without ramps onto the ground below. Cattle also have their eyes stabbed at with knives and the tendons on each leg slashed to subdue them for slaughter, practices which are agonizing and terrifying for the animals, and completely unnecessary. The footage also shows slaughtermen poking cattle in the eyes as they are wrangled to the ground, and even after the cattle have their throats slit. There is no reasonable explanation for the slaughtermen to do this, and it is simply malicious abuse. Slick floors are totally unacceptable. Animals panic when they start slipping. This plant is an old antiquated wreck that needs to be replaced.

The footage also shows one example of a blindfolded cow beaten towards the slaughterhouse with a metal pole, forced to navigate narrow, slippery ledges while still blindfolded, before both his rear leg tendons are slashed and he is slaughtered while still blindfolded. This must be a terrifying experience for the cattle and simply heaps abuse upon abuse.

The sheep shown in the footage of Egyptian slaughterhouses are also treated cruelly, by having their legs tied together and being crammed into car trunks to be driven to slaughter. Being trapped in a tiny, hot, noisy space with no way to become more comfortable or escape must cause great distress and suffering to the sheep who are subjected to it.

Oman

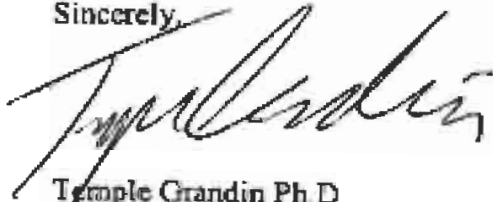
The footage shows several examples of sheep in different slaughterhouses being kicked, dragged by their hind legs, horns and ears into the slaughterhouses and across the slaughterhouse floors, having their hind legs used as levers to flip them onto the ground, and otherwise abused before having their throats hacked open with blunt knives while still fully conscious, and being left piled on top of one another to bleed out and die.

One sheep is needlessly kicked in the head to drive him towards a blood drain to be killed. Many sheep are cruelly forced to jump over a meter off truck with no ramp onto slippery floor, many fall and injure themselves on landing. None of these practices are necessary to handle and slaughter the sheep efficiently and all of these practices must causes the sheep high levels of pain and distress.

Kuwait

The footage of the slaughterhouse in Kuwait, where sheep are roughly dragged by their hind legs across the slaughterhouse floor and flipped onto their backs using their hind legs as a lever before they are slammed to the floor, was some of the worst footage of all. Dragging sheep by the leg across the room is an unacceptable handling method, and it is obvious from the footage that the sheep are terrified, as they frantically struggle to get away from the slaughtermen. The sheep are then piled on top of each other to have their throats slit over the blood drain; they are conscious and struggling for some time after their throats are slit. Kuwait has the resources to and should build a decent slaughter plant that would cause far less pain and distress to the sheep being slaughtered.

Sincerely,



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Livestock Consultant