

MR 06 03**18 JULY 2003****Industry launches new animal handling project**

The Australian livestock export industry's ongoing commitment to improving the treatment of animals has been further demonstrated today with the launch of a project aimed specifically at assisting our trading partners to implement improved animal handling and processing techniques.

The A\$150,000 initiative, jointly funded by industry (2/3) and the Federal Government (1/3), will be overseen by the Live Export Industry Consultative Committee (LEICC) ¹.

In announcing the project Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Livestock Export Corporation (LiveCorp), Kevin Shiell, applauded the collaborative effort in bringing the concept to reality.

"This funding is in addition to our significant annual budget allocation for animal handling and processing projects and will assist in fast tracking the work we already have in train to improve the treatment of animals.

"A project of this kind is something industry has been considering for some time but it has had to be developed with cognisance to sensitivities of imposing western standards on countries with different religious and cultural beliefs to Australia.

"We have been working closely with the various authorities in importing countries for years, trying to demonstrate, through the supply of equipment and training, the benefits of improved animal handling techniques right from discharge and transport through to processing.

"It has been rewarding to see progress recently as some countries have been convinced and are matching our efforts to upgrade their systems.

"For example, we have been working, for the past two years with management of the Basateen abattoir in Egypt, where the majority of Australian cattle exported to the Middle East are processed. We commissioned a review of the facility, introduced a 'restraining device' and made recommendations to the facility's management for ongoing improvements.

"These recommendations have been welcomed, taken up, and Egyptian Government funding, along with our funding, has now been allocated towards their implementation.

"Another area we see this project supporting is in designing, building and implementing transport 'platforms' to smooth the flow of stock between varying types of transport with little need for human intervention and minimal stress on the animals involved.

“We also see funds being put into an extensive and ongoing training program for animal handlers in customer countries” Mr Shiell said.

“The \$1 billion livestock trade is vital to Australia’s agricultural export earnings and to the economies of rural and regional areas, particularly in times of drought.

“Industry has made a lot of progress over the years in addressing animal treatment issues, and is fully committed to a regime of continuous improvement.

“The establishment of this project is testament to that commitment.” Mr Shiell concluded.

Meat and Livestock Australia’s (MLA) General Manager of Overseas Operations, Mike Hayward fully supported the initiative and said it would help to build upon valuable work already carried out in many overseas markets.

“MLA is committed to improving animal health and handling in the live export trade and it remains a major focus of the industry’s \$1.2 million research and development program. This government/industry initiative is an important one for all concerned.” he said.

Ends

1. LEICC Members

National Consultative Committee of Animal Welfare
Australian Veterinary Association
Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Quarantine and Export Advisory Council
Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service
Australian Maritime Safety Authority
Australian Livestock Exporters’ Council
Cattle Council of Australia
Sheepmeat Council of Australia
Meat and Livestock Australia
The Australian Livestock Export Corporation

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The livestock export program is jointly funded by the livestock exporters and producers of Australia