

media release

LIVESTOCK DEATHS JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

The human and animal deaths resulting from the sinking of live animal export ship, the Danny F 11, are sadly the latest in a long line of disasters at sea for the international trade in live animals.

Live exporters' claims over the weekend that the trade is safe for the animals involved are simply laughable, considering around 40,000 cattle, sheep and goats don't survive the sea journey from Australia every year.

"The terrible drowning of the 28,000 cattle and sheep on the Danny F 11 highlights the inherent dangers in transporting live animals over such long distances but the majority of deaths at sea are actually related to the stress of being transported," said the RSPCA's Melina Tensen.

"Every year tens of thousands of animals exported from Australia perish at sea from illness, disease or starvation. Livestock on these journeys can suffer through extreme temperatures, diseases such as pink eye, pneumonia, inanition (failure to eat) and injury.

"The RSPCA believes it's nonsensical to send animals over such long distances overseas, just to be slaughtered. Often subjected to rough handling and transport in importing countries, Australian animals are then killed by having their throat cut while fully conscious.

"Livestock are subjected to this cruel trade despite our meat exports being nearly five times more valuable to the Australian economy than live animal exports. And despite the ongoing negative impact on Australian jobs, particularly meat processors.

"No amount of regulation will ever make the live animal trade safe or humane. Economic work recently commissioned by the RSPCA has revealed that there are alternatives that are better for animals, better for Australian jobs and better for the Australian economy."

History of disasters at sea (visit www.rspca.org.au for a full list)

2009 – Shipment from Uruguay

18,000 cattle and 10,000 sheep drowned when the Panamanian ship, the Danny F 11, sank during stormy weather on its way from Uruguay to Syria.

The search for the 83 crew members continues.

Death Toll: Around 28,000 cattle and sheep

2007 - Cattle shipment to Jakarta

In March 2007 a ship carrying 1,695 cattle on an 8-day voyage from Fremantle to Jakarta (operated by Halleen Australasian Livestock Traders Pty Ltd) was battered by a cyclone.

Death toll: 68 cattle (4.01%)

2006 - MV Maysora

247 cattle died due to septicaemia (from infected injuries), heat stress and pneumonia during a journey to Israel. Only 30 - 40 of the cattle were euthanased. Over 200 cattle from the Maysora then died of pneumonia in feedlots after arrival.

Death toll: 247 cattle

2006 - Al Messilah

The Al Messilah carried a total of 320 cattle and 71,309 sheep to the Middle East. Many of these animals died along the way due to failure to eat and heat stress.

Death toll: 6 cattle and 1683 sheep

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2003 - MV Cormo Express 2003

57,000 sheep spent almost three months stranded at sea after being rejected by a Saudi Arabian importer. When an alternative buyer could not be found, the Australian Government purchased the sheep and donated them to Eritrea.

Death toll: Almost 6000

2002 – Cormo Express, Corriedale Express, Al Shuwaikh and Al Messilah

In July and August four shipments of sheep recorded high death rates during export to the Middle East, and a total of 15,156 sheep died during the voyage and discharge phase.

Death Toll: 1,064 sheep on the Cormo Express; 6,119 sheep on the Corriedale Express; 5,800 sheep on the Al Shuwaikh; 2,173 on the Al Messilah

N.B. The Al Shuwaikh, was allowed to load more sheep in September and leave for the ME before any reports were completed, albeit with an AQIS vet on board. A further 2,304 (3%) sheep died.

2002 - MV Becrux

On its maiden voyage the MV Becrux carried 1,995 cattle and 60,000 sheep to Saudi Arabia. Many perished after the vessel met extreme temperatures and humidity in the Arabian Gulf. The remaining animals were rejected by Saudi Arabia and had to remain on board until another buyer was found.

Death toll: 880 cattle and 1400 sheep

1999 - Temburong 1999

More than 800 cattle suffocated when power loss caused ventilation failure on the ship during the voyage from Darwin to Irian Yaya.

Death toll: 829 cattle

1998 - Charolais Express

50% of the cattle carried on the Charolais Express either suffocated during transport or were too ill to be offloaded at their destination and were slaughtered at sea.

Death toll: 570 cattle

1998 - Anomis

2400 goats and cattle arrived in Malaysia but could not unload for over two weeks due to a financial dispute between the exporter, shipper and importer.

Death toll: 283 goats and 154 cattle

1996 - Uniceb

67,000 sheep were left to die on board the Uniceb after it caught fire and sunk in the Indian Ocean North-east of the Seychelles.

Death toll: 67,000 sheep

1996 - Guernsey Express

Over 1500 cattle drowned when the Guernsey Express sank on its way to Osaka Japan.

Death toll: 1,592 cattle