

For all creatures great and small.

FAIR GO FOR FARM ANIMALS

MEDIA RELEASE

BOBBY CALF TRANSPORT - A REASON TO CRY OVER SPILT MILK

RSPCA Australia is calling for the draft national livestock transport standards, recently released for public comment, to go further in safeguarding the welfare of new born (bobby) calves in Australia.

Few consumers would be aware of the plight of the bobby calf, widely considered to be a 'waste product' of the dairy industry. To produce milk, cows need to give birth to a calf every year. Calves are taken away from their mothers within a day of being born and most are transported for slaughter a few days later.

"If you've ever seen a new-born, knobby-kneed calf struggling to stand you would wonder how it could be expected to travel up to 18 hours by truck," RSPCA Scientific Officer, Melina Tensen, said.

"The experience is stressful for the calf and gives rise to serious welfare concerns, particularly in relation to the ability of such young animals to withstand the rigours of transport.

"This is an ugly side to an industry that sends more than 780,000 bobby calves to slaughter every year and this consultation period provides a good opportunity to address a major welfare issue in the dairy industry.

"The RSPCA is concerned that the draft Standards allow bobby calves to be transported at an age (5 days old) and at journey times (18 hours) that show little consideration of their ability to withstand the stresses of transport.

"We would like to see the new national Standards increase the minimum age at which bobby calves can travel to at least 10 days old with the time interval from farm to abattoir to not exceed 10 hours. Vehicles must also provide calves with protection from the elements, with thick bedding and room to lie down."

The RSPCA wants a number of other issues addressed in the draft Standards including: the total time that animals are allowed to be off water; the handling of animals, including the use of electric prodders; the space provided during transport; and rest considerations for more vulnerable classes of farm animal.

This consultation period is the public's chance to have their say about the transport of farm animals in Australia. For more information or for help making a submission visit www.rspca.org.au. The deadline for submissions is **27 May 2008**.