

20 November 2013

Ms Rebecca Irwin
First Assistant Secretary
Department of Agriculture
GPO Box 858
CANBERRA ACT 2 601

Dear Ms Irwin

I write on behalf of the Australian Livestock Exporters' Council (ALEC) to notify you of a possible breach of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS). This correspondence follows a preliminary discussion with staff of the Live Export Division on Tuesday 12 November 2013.

Earlier this month, a third party contacted ALEC by email and provided a link to a You Tube video containing shocking footage of a man using a rifle to shoot at the legs of a bull. The bull, which appears to have come loose from tethering, is shot at several times in what appears to be an attempt to immobilise it. The video ends before the fate of the bull is known.

The video was posted on the 22nd of October 2013. It was suggested by the third party that provided the footage to me that the footage was taken in the Gaza strip but there is no definitive or independent indication of this in the footage in our assessment. The footage seems to indicate the bull was held in a private courtyard. There are several approved supply chains in the Gaza strip but the footage suggests that this animal was held outside of an approved supply chain.

The video can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDvtgcyVkMg.

Since becoming aware of the footage, ALEC has undertaken an internal assessment to ascertain the likelihood of the bull being of Australian origin. Those exposed to the video were indeed horrified by it.

Following that assessment and on the face of the footage, including signs of a yellow ear tag in the left ear, it is of concern to ALEC that the bull may be of Australian origin. Due to the poor quality of the footage, we are unable to interrogate this proposition including any traceback by eartag number. We do not have the resources to undertake a forensic assessment of the footage to assist in our inquiries.

Given the extent of the cruelty on display, our concern for the welfare of an animal of possible Australian origin and a potential breach of ESCAS, ALEC is so concerned that we are taking this extraordinary step to write to the Department and ask for an interrogation of the footage in the context of a possible breach of ESCAS. Should the Department have sufficient information to undertake an investigation into the matter, ALEC and its members will provide our support.

In broader terms, we note that a number of recent complaints of possible breaches of ESCAS relate to alleged leakages from ESCAS approved supply chains. While we await the outcomes of your investigations into these complaints and without prejudice, industry is considering options to strengthen traceability and control mechanisms within supply chains. As decisions are taken, I will advise the Department.

In conclusion, let me state very clearly on behalf of all ALEC Members that we do not condone in any shape or form cruelty to animals and find the behaviour in the video horrific and obscene. There is no justification for such atrocious behaviour.

Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A Penfold', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alison Penfold
Chief Executive Officer