



Submission by
Against Animal Cruelty Tasmania (AACT)

to the Review of
Australian Animal Welfare Standards -
Cattle

Introduction

It is important for AACT to establish from the outset that we believe the use of cattle by humans is essentially unnecessary and wrong. The prevailing belief among most people is that cattle were placed on the earth for humans to do with as they please. Besides being quite erroneous, this has led to a disturbing trend to use and abuse non-human species with little regard to the feelings and desires of those species. Humans can and should learn to live without imposing their will on other species such as cattle.

We can and should remove our dependence on cattle as food and fibre by utilising other sources to feed and clothe ourselves. There are very many non-animal products that are less violent (to cattle), healthier (to cattle and to humans), and less environmentally damaging (to all species).

Well-being of Cattle

There is no question in our minds that many practices involving cattle are inherently exploitative and abusive. Humans have come to falsely believe that cattle were provided for humans to do with as they choose. This fallacy has persisted through many centuries to the point where few people stop to question its validity. It is no more valid than saying Australian Aborigines were put here for the British to use and abuse as they choose. While this did happen when the British "settled" Australia, many have realised the error of their ways, and so too should they realise the error of their ways in respect of cattle.

Cows, bulls and calves are sentient beings. Each one of them has thoughts and feelings. We really do not know exactly what bovines experience of life, but it is fair to say they have a very strong connection to it, just as we do. We can assume they have a passion for living and a fear of dying.

What must change is the consideration of non-human animals, such as cows, bulls and calves, as being "owned" by humans. They are currently accorded the status of property and their value is only that which is given by their "owner". We need to accord non-human animals their proper status as sentient beings. We must value them for their own sake, for their own intrinsic worth.

One thing that is missing in most dialogue about cattle is the consideration of each cow, bull, or calf as an individual. There is a very strong tendency to group all such individuals

together with the one collective term cattle (and we have done so here only for the sake of convention) and to treat them as one amorphous “thing”. This is wrong. Each cow, bull or calf is an individual, just as each human is an individual. They each have their own needs, fears, wants, thoughts, feelings. One just needs to look into the eye of a cow and know there is something unique and special about that creature.

“Dairy”

The dairy industry in Australia is massive and is based on extreme violence and abuse of dairy cows and calves. Dairy cows are allowed to live for an average 5-7 years, much less than the typical 25 years average lifespan. “Bobby” calves however are given just a few days to live before being sent to slaughter. There are around 700,000 “bobby” calves killed each year in Australia - the “waste” products of dairying.

(The comments in the **Well-being of Cattle** section also apply here).

Flesh (“beef” and “veal”)

The cattle flesh industry in Australia has reached sizeable proportions, meaning that it is responsible for the suffering of millions of individuals. In Australia around 8 million cattle (including calves) are killed for their flesh.

Calves raised for “veal” suffer each day of their short miserable lives in highly unnatural confinement and deprivation. Cattle raised for “beef” may have a better life but many end up in feedlots, and all are killed very much short of their natural lifespan.

(The comments in the **Well-being of Cattle** section also apply here).

“Leather”

The leather industry began as a by-product of the “beef” industry, but today it is an industry in itself. It is based on exploitation and abuse and is unnecessary. Leather goods are primarily a “luxury” item, used as upholstery in upmarket vehicles and on furniture for the wealthy, among other things. This industry exists because the animals are perceived as property and their skin is a commodity that can be bought and sold. Violence, abuse

and exploitation breeds more of the same.

(The comments in the **Well-being of Cattle** section also apply here).

Live Export

Live export in Australia is yet another of those industries that seeks to exploit non-human animals for human purposes. Hundreds of thousands of cattle are transported long distances by road and by ship in crowded, stinking, stressful conditions. Once again this is unnecessary in a compassionate world that rightly recognises each individual as a sentient being.

(The comments in the **Well-being of Cattle** section also apply here).

Transport

Transport of cattle is also a routine operation carried out by the “dairy: and “flesh” industries, and is essentially a by-product of it. Transporting cattle is unnecessary, just as the need for cattle to exist in such numbers is unnecessary. When the human dependence on cattle is removed there is no longer a need to move them around in great numbers from farms to saleyards to slaughterhouses.

(The comments in the **Well-being of Cattle** section also apply here).

Slaughter

Slaughter is an act of absolute violence – the taking of a life. Killing for the sake of killing is unequivocally wrong. So-called “humane killing” is still killing, and is no less violent, and is by no means “humane”.

Humans can exist without routinely taking the lives of others. Killing need not be inherent in the lives of humans. A compassionate approach to living will negate the need for slaughter of the innocent.

(The comments in the **Well-being of Cattle** section also apply here).

Human Health

Many of the widespread ills that afflict humans in Western countries are a direct result of consuming the flesh and milk of bovines (and other species) [ref]. So many people are “addicted” to the taste of these products of violence that they scarcely consider the harm they are bringing to themselves as a result of the harm done to others.

Environmental

In 2006 the FAO released a report called Livestock's Long Shadow that brought to public attention the environmentally damaging effects of global dependence on products of animal agriculture. In 2009 an even more damning report was produced by World Watch that revealed 51 percent of harmful greenhouse gases (GHG's) are caused by animal agriculture [Goodland and Anhang 2009].

There is no possible question of the environmental damage of farming cattle. They are one of the largest emitters of methane, a particularly harmful GHG. Methane is now recognised as being more than 70 times as potent as carbon dioxide in its potential to affect the earth's climate. They also contribute to land degradation and loss of habitat for native species.

Continuing reliance by humans on products from non-human animals, in particular cattle, is having a devastating affect on the earth on which we all depend. Humans have a moral obligation to change their consumption patterns and reverse this distressing trend.

Conclusion

Humans must change their attitude to other species, including cattle. We must stop thinking of them as property. We must give them the right not to be exploited by humans, and recognise them as sentient beings. When that happens, our relationship to them changes, and the abuse and exploitation stops.

More than eight million bovines are slaughtered every year in Australia. A change that accords cattle the right not to be exploited will be a change of great magnitude.

References

Goodland and Anhang (2009), Livestock and Climate Change, World Watch