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Home duties

Firstly I would like to congratulate you on setting these guidelines. It has been a long held concern of mine that our livestock suffer unnecessarily during transportation. Livestock animals are often treated as a commodity rather than a living creature with the ability to experience pleasure, pain and suffering. Any movement away from this "feedlot" mentality towards more humane treatment can only be in the best interests of us all.

There are a few points I would like to express my opinion on.

* I fully support a ban on electric prodders. Having grown up on a property supporting cattle, sheep and horses and now also having experience with goats I find the use of prodders to be cruel and totally avoidable.

*One of my major concerns regarding transportation has to do with temperature. I have witnessed on numerous occasions, truckloads of sheep being driven in bumper to bumper traffic (Melbourne traffic) on extremely hot days. There have been sheep with their heads hanging out of the side of the truck, tongues out and no appearance of life. These are possibly the lucky ones as those in the middle of the truck would have been experiencing far worse conditions.

The guidelines relating to ambient temperature and stocking densities are in my opinion too ambiguous. Left to operator discretion there will always be some operators who value the dollar over animal welfare. I suggest a carefully researched table be compiled as for liveweight eg

GB3.6 with full ban on daytime transport when the weather reaches a critical value.

On warmer days it should be appropriate to increase water availability and rest times for stock. If stock must be moved on days of extreme heat perhaps it could be done before sunrise or after sunset.

* Bobby calf transport appears to be a cruel necessity in the current system of dairying.

GB4.15 allows 10 hours to reach the processing plant. This is an extremely long journey for such a young animal. The nearest processing plant should be the one all operators use, unless exceptional circumstances present, to make this journey for the calves as short as possible.

A gap of 12 hours between feeds is also far too long. I realise this is much shorter than many calves currently experience but in a natural situation calves feed little and often and 12 hours is excessive when it is possible to shorten this gap.

* Another concern is the lack of consideration for lactating stock with relation to water availability. Obviously production of milk requires increased water consumption. This should be noted and catered for regardless of the species.

*Finally more of an observation than anything. The section on transport of horses is very thorough and in depth., when compared to, for instance the chapter on pigs. Horses, although classified as livestock are often seen more as pets and possibly that is why they have received the extra attention. Many studies (eg <http://www.rps.psu.edu/probing/pigs.html>) have shown that animals such as pigs are highly intelligent and thought not often seen as "pets" surely the consideration for their welfare should be based on an animals ability to suffer, not on it's perceived level of "cuteness".

It is time we dispensed with old fashioned welfare patterns where one set of rules applies to pet animals and a different set to livestock. An animal is an animal regardless of human classification.

I hope these guidelines are just the tip of the iceberg in relation to livestock welfare reform.

Regards Sharon Reid