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## **Summary**

On 21 August 2013 the department received an anonymous report via email alleging that Australian cattle exported to Malaysia were being managed, handled and slaughtered in a manner not compliant with World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) recommendations.

The department's investigation assessed information provided by the complainant, the exporter, departmental records and information from the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) database.

The investigation was unable to confirm the allegations of poor animal handling, management and slaughter. However, the photographs of ear tags enabled the department to identify the relevant exporter, who subsequently reported loss of cattle from the approved supply chain, and loss of control of the supply chain. This was the first consignment exported to this supply chain.

The exporter has committed to not export any more cattle to this supply chain. The department will take information from this investigation into account should exporters seek to export to this supply chain in the future.

## **1. The Complaint**

On 21 August 2013 the department received an anonymous report alleging that Australian cattle exported to Malaysia were being managed, handled and slaughtered in a manner not compliant with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) recommendations. The complaint was accompanied by some photographs of cattle and some National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) ear tags. The complaint alleged that the cattle were not adequately fed, were injured during handling and were inhumanely slaughtered.

Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) requirements for feeder and slaughter livestock exported to Malaysia took effect from 1 September 2012. The consignment of cattle that was the subject of this investigation is the only consignment exported to this supply chain since the introduction of ESCAS requirements for Malaysia. A supply chain consists of an importer and all associated feedlots, abattoirs and transport operators agreed between the importer and exporter to receive, transport, handle and slaughter each consignment of livestock.

## **2. Conduct of the Investigation**

The focus of the investigation was to determine if non-compliance with ESCAS requirements occurred and whether OIE animal welfare recommendations were met.

The complainant provided photographs of NLIS tags and photographs of cattle but no information on where or when the photographs were taken. The department emailed the complainant seeking further information on 5 September 2013 but no response was received.

The department was able to link the NLIS tags to cattle exported by North Australian Cattle Company (NACC) using the NLIS database. The company exported 1595 cattle on 3 July 2013 which arrived in Malaysia on 10 July 2013.

The department wrote to NACC requesting information on, amongst other things, how many animals remained alive and how many had been slaughtered. All information requested was supplied to the department by NACC.

## **3. Investigation Findings**

The photographs of the cattle provided with the complaint showed two animals in poor condition and other animals in fair or good condition. The cattle had NLIS tags but the tag numbers were not readable. It was not possible from these photographs to establish the exporter of these animals, or if a non-compliance with ESCAS requirements had occurred.

However, the photographs of the NLIS tags linked to cattle exported by NACC. In response to the department's request for information, NACC stated that 1509 animals were slaughtered at the approved supply chain abattoir, based on scanned tag records, and four died in the feedlots. A further 29 cattle were involved in a transport accident. The department received a Malaysian police report outlining the details of this accident. The whereabouts of the remaining 53 cattle was unknown.

The exporter reported to the department that the importer failed to provide information about the 53 cattle that were unaccounted for and information about the welfare of the cattle in the approved feedlots. The ESCAS for the consignment included an agreement between NACC and the importer for the importer to supply information if requested by NACC. As a result of the

importer's failure to comply with this agreement, the exporter reported a loss of control within the approved supply chain, and committed to not export any more cattle to the importer.

#### **4. Investigation Conclusions**

The investigation was unable to confirm the allegation that the cattle were being managed, handled and slaughtered in a manner not compliant with OIE recommendations. However, using the NLIS tags, the investigation was able to identify that 53 cattle left an approved supply chain in Malaysia and cannot be accounted for.

Although the supply chain had been satisfactorily audited as having the capacity to meet ESCAS requirements before it was approved, two months after the first shipment arrived, the exporter was unable to obtain from the importer details about the location of 53 cattle, reporting a total breakdown of communication. The investigation concluded that there was a loss of traceability and control with the exporter's ESCAS arrangements.

#### **5. Regulatory Action**

The findings of the investigation do not support regulatory action being taken against the exporter. Once provided with information about possible leakage of cattle and poor treatment in the feedlots, the exporter investigated these issues with the importer and identified that 53 animals were unable to be accounted for. The exporter was unable to obtain from the importer information about the welfare of cattle at the feedlots or the fate of the missing animals. The exporter was provided with data from the abattoir that demonstrated 1509 of 1595 cattle were slaughtered there. The exporter committed to not export any more cattle to this importer.

The department has not received any further applications to export livestock to this supply chain. In the event that the department received an application to export livestock to this supply chain, the outcomes of this investigation would be considered relevant information when deciding whether to approve an application and whether or not to apply additional conditions to the application.