

CATTLE EXPORTS TO THE EASTERN STATES

Statement

HON MURRAY CRIDDLE (Agricultural) [5.30 pm]: I want to bring to the notice of the House and, in particular, to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries an issue concerning the export of cattle, in this instance, into the eastern States. A lot of stock has gone across the border into the eastern States in recent times, but this is for a cattle market for breeding heifers in China. I want to read a letter from Elders International Australia Limited, signed by Andrew Ingle, that encapsulates the problem Western Australia has with its accreditation program for heavy haulage trucks. This problem with accreditation has been around for quite some time and it revolves around the inspection system in Western Australia that does not comply with the eastern States, which does not allow our transporters to complete the road journey into the eastern States. In this case it means that unloading of cattle occurs at Port Augusta from one truck to another just to continue with the journey for the last 300 kilometres into the Nasser feedlot in Dublin, South Australia before they are shipped out. The issue is that there are not enough cattle in Victoria and Western Australia to complete a load for transshipment to China. I want to put this letter on the record. I hope the minister in charge of road haulage will take up this issue and do something about it, because it has been around for far too long. The accreditation process in Western Australia is in disarray. I recently attended the Australian Livestock Transporters Association conference and they are not happy at all. These sorts of things lead to enormous expense. In this case the cost of transshipment at Port Augusta is about \$2 000, which is an impost that we cannot stand. The minister knows the dairy industry's problems at this time, and this just exacerbates the problems of the industry financially. The letter states -

I am writing on behalf of Elders International Australia Limited, to try to assist the successful application of a permit to transport cattle by road train from Port Augusta through to Nasser Feedlot "Dublin SA". Currently Elders International is heavily involved with the China heifer live-export industry. We have been operating in this market for in the east states for about 3 years now and have purchased over 40,000 cattle from Dairy farms in the eastern states in 2003 and are on target to do the same in 2004. This has provided a huge boost to the struggling dairy industry and many other third parties involved since its beginning.

More recently we have expanded our operation into southern Western Australia, and over the past six months have purchased approx 2500 head of Dairy heifers for the Chinese market in WA. We are on track to continue to have a strong presence in the Western Australian Dairy heifer market throughout 2005 and beyond.

Although it is our preferred option to carry out the 30 day pre export quarantine period in the West and ship the cattle from Fremantle, we are sometimes forced to truck cattle to the east to prepare them for export in a quarantine facility in Victoria. This is due to reasons such as shipping logistics, or numbers being too low to warrant sending a boat into Fremantle and then onto Portland for a small lot of cattle.

I believe that road trains from other states are able to be taken straight into Nasser Feedlot at Dublin so wonder why the WA livestock trucks are not able to do so. Currently we are faced with having to cross load cattle at Port Augusta to take them the final stage of the journey to Dublin. These cattle have already been on the trucks long enough and cross loading is not a preferred option for animal welfare reasons. Also there are strict AQIS requirements regarding the China live-export industry and strict codes of trucking which need to be followed to transport any cattle for this market and having to switch trucks is opposed by AQIS also.

Therefore I ask you to consider either issuing permits to accredited trucking companies such as Mitchells Transport or attempting to change the rules in regards to road trains being allowed to go directly from WA into Dublin Feedlot.

It seems to me that an enormous amount of money could be saved in an industry that everyone has indicated is struggling. Any benefit that those people can get from saving \$2 000 is worthwhile. The minister knows that transport costs are passed directly to the farmer. It would be of great assistance if the problem could be fixed. The accreditation process in place in Western Australia is far too cumbersome. There is too much paperwork. It is not fair on the various trucking operators across the State. Sheep and cattle - in this case cattle - go into South Australia. It causes problems in the eastern States. It could easily be fixed with the stroke of a pen. I urge the minister to pass the message to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to solve the problem.