

## 6.7 Beef cattle welfare

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# Beef cattle welfare

- Significant changes in beef cattle welfare (improvements) over the past fifty years
- This will continue to evolve with societal expectations changing once you graduate – social license
- Most countries have a range of laws regarding animal welfare that impacts on beef cattle production – different between different countries so need to know local laws
- Two key areas in Australia
  - POCTA
  - Standards and Guidelines

# Prevention of cruelty to animals act (POCTA)

- POCTA (1986) = Commonwealth Act covering animal cruelty in Australia
- Regulations pertaining to this act are enforced in each state e.g. Vic regulations 2019
- <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/pocta-act-1986/about-the-prevention-of-cruelty-to-animals-legislation#h2-1>
- Entertainment also included e.g. use of cattle in rodeo (which originates from beef cattle handling)
- Also governs use of animals in teaching, such as animals used in animal handling

# Standards and Guidelines

- Range of different standards and guidelines that apply to the beef industry (these have superseded the earlier Codes of Practice but are similar rules)
- E.g. Animal welfare standards and guidelines and Land transport of livestock standards and guidelines
- Variation on if codes of practice still in place or standards and guidelines in different states
- Standards = enterprise MUST do
- Guidelines = enterprise would ideally do to operate at a higher level
- Law makers must consider the range of areas that animals are managed in when designing laws so these are BASE level requirements eg in some areas may be very normal to always castrate before 3 months but may be impractical in Northern Territory

# Some examples of “controversial” practises

- Live export
- Spaying
- Castration
- Dehorning

# Live export

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- Compared to live sheep export generally much shorter voyage in same general temperature e.g. northern Australia to SE Asia (Indonesia, Vietnam etc) – short haul transport, but there are limited examples of longer haul
- Less welfare risks with shorter journey in same environment
- Potential differences in slaughter method and particularly livestock handling between different countries (this caused ban on live cattle export in 2011)
- ESCAS put in place to improve confidence stock slaughtered in accordance with OIE (WOAH) requirements – designed to ensure animal welfare, supply chain control, traceability and allow audit



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erBb9Pyxaqc>

# Live export

- How should we measure improvements in animal welfare over time?
- Death rate? Averages approximate 0.1% or 1 animal in 1000 (important to note takes about 8 days to move stock even on short haul and some mixing of stock)
- Behavioural indicators?
- What measures are practical and reliable?
- Why use live export – what are the benefits?

**Table 1.** The Five Domains of animal welfare [7] (left hand column) and their association with the Principles (middle column) and Criteria (right hand column) forming the basis of the Welfare Quality® assessment [14] protocols. Colours are cross-referenced to Table 3.

Five Domains	Welfare Principles	Welfare Criteria
1. Nutrition	Good feeding	1 Absence of prolonged hunger
		2 Absence of prolonged thirst
		3 Comfort around resting
2. Environment	Good housing	4 Thermal comfort
		5 Ease of movement
		6 Absence of injuries
3. Health	Good health	7 Absence of disease
		8 Absence of pain induced by management procedures
		9 Expression of social behaviours
4. Behaviour	Appropriate behaviour	10 Expression of other behaviours
		11 Good human-animal relationship
5. Mental state		12 Positive emotional state

*Review*

## **Review of Livestock Welfare Indicators Relevant for the Australian Live Export Industry**

Patricia A. Fleming \*, Sarah L. Wickham, Emma J. Dunston-Clarke, Renee S. Willis, Anne L. Barnes, David W. Miller and Teresa Collins

# Spaying

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- Desexing female cattle to stop them becoming pregnant again and to allow them to get fatter for sale
- Northern Australia
- Generally not performed in southern Australia where fencing is better
- Willis dropped ovary technique used (used to be flank spey)



# Castration

- Very common technique
- Until recently done without pain relief but now there are registered products for this (either local anaesthetic or analgesic)
- Performed to reduce aggression, reduce infrastructure damage, less EHS issues, decrease unwanted pregnancy
- Immunocastration (but less marketable)

# Dehorning

- Only required for animals that have horns initially, so not needed in polled animals
- Polled gene dominant in British Breed
- Increased ability to select polled through genomics
- Ideal to do as young as possible
- Pain relief now available
- Part of QA programs