

# **Kent Action Against Live Exports (KAALE)**

## **Patrons:**

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**Contact:** Chairman - Mr. Ian Birchall – Mobile 07968 134489

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> April 2012

**Official Complaint – Reference: KAALE / 06/ 30<sup>th</sup> June / 2012**

**To:** Mr. J. Paice; Minister of State for Agriculture and Food,

Defra, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR.

Dear Sir, Ref: - PO273247/MP

Thank you for answering my letter dated May 15<sup>th</sup> so promptly.

I do understand that certain procedures are adhered to by Animal Health during bad weather conditions but have always found that these procedures never take into account the stress and fear conditions such as described by us inflicted on the animals. That commerce comes first is very obvious and sentiment is never taken into consideration. However, we must continue bringing these 'bad weather' sailings to your attention and since your letter yet another one has occurred.

On Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June, once again, the weather turned inclement during the loading of the Joline and the wind started to rise. We contacted Animal Health who once again said they had consulted the captain and the MCA and everyone was of the opinion that the sailing could go ahead. We expected no different but we have to try. Because of the conditions the ship took the longer inshore route down to St Margaret's Bay and then turned to cross the channel the way the larger ferries do. All the time the wind was rising and the normal journey of 4 hours approximately became a journey of over 5 hours.

Once again she was observed pitching and tossing in an unforgiving sea and when she reached Calais, on entering the bay where she berths the wind had reached force 6, (22-27 knots on the Beaufort Scale), inside the harbour. As a result she struck the quay when manoeuvring and it is our understanding that she damaged her ramp which then took about 45 minutes to lower due to this. We know the animals arrived and continued their journey but feel the amount of stress they were subjected to is unnecessary and cruel beyond belief.

Moving on, the reason I was of the opinion that our photographs had been taken into consideration during recent months is because we were told to get proof by one of your Animal Health inspectors before they could do anything. This is what we did and things improved all during the months before Christmas. It is only since the New Year that the ship seems to have once again sailed in bad conditions.

That your procedures have been in place for many years will mean that these same procedures were used on the night of 22/23 November 2006 when the then animal ship The Fast Navigator left Dover in a force 6

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rising 8 by the time it reached Dunkerque in spite of our pleas for consideration for the animals. This sailing resulted in one of the 14 transporters chained in the hold falling onto its side killing three cows and injuring many others. We, as 'volunteers', informed the then State Veterinary Service what had happened and they confirmed this 'accident' after ringing Dunkerque. If we hadn't told them they would have never known.

Somehow these 'procedures' give little help to the cargo these ships carry. The attitude was then and is now that these animals are going to be slaughtered anyway but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to make them suffer for so long prior to slaughter is unacceptable.

We ask you once again to look into the conditions this ship is allowed to sail in, bearing in mind that she was designed to cross rivers not the English Channel. We will continue to press for change due to the fear and stress bad weather crossings impose on the animals and we ask you to remember that the captain and the MCA are not qualified to judge for these animals only for the ship. When they have the necessary qualifications to make judgements vets should be making based on scientific evidence then we will accept their decisions.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr Paice by snail mail enclosing a copy of the report we did from 2006 and a photograph taken by a member of the public from St. Margaret's Bay cliffs on the 14<sup>th</sup> May during the sailing that was the subject of our last complaint. Unfortunately the quality of the photograph is poor due to the ordinary camera it was taken on but I think he will get the general idea of just how bad the conditions were.

*Yours Sincerely*

*Ian Birchall – Chairman – KAALÉ.*

