

BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEWS

A Far Cry from Noah: The Live Export Trade in Calves, Sheep and Pigs

Peter Stevenson (1994). Green Print: London. 128pp. Paperback. Obtainable from Compassion in World Farming, Charles House, 5A Charles Street, Petersfield, Hampshire GU32 3EH, UK (ISBN 1 85425 089 2). Price £5.99.

This book, apart from Chapter 14 (the Irish Trade contributed by Mary-Anne Bartlett), is written by the Political Director of the animal welfare pressure group Compassion in World Farming. It thus, by its very provenance, must reflect one particular point of view and objective. Indeed, the whole purpose of the book is to influence the reader to join the campaign to stop the export of cattle, sheep and pigs from Great Britain to other Member States of the European Union for fattening or slaughter.

In her foreword to the book Joanna Lumley writes:

‘My hope is that it (the book) will activate and motivate as many people as possible so that our government is forced to listen to our demands for an end to this intolerable trade in living creatures.’

Despite the inevitable slant in the presentation of facts, the book does contain a useful summary of the main landmarks of the last forty years of this trade in livestock and the campaign for its abolition.

The book is divided into three parts. Part One, comprising Chapters 1 to 7, relates the history of the transport of fattening and slaughter animals from Great Britain to the Continent of Europe from 1956 onwards. The campaign both inside and outside Parliament is to improve the welfare of the animals involved or to abolish their export altogether. This includes the discussion and implementation of the recommendations from two important Committees of Enquiry, the Balfour Committee and the O’Brien Committee. In addition attention is paid to the ‘economic aspects’ of the trade, particularly the loss of work for slaughterhouses in Great Britain and the loss of ‘raw material’, in the shape of young calves, sold to European veal producers at prices which beef producers in Great Britain could not afford.

Part Two, Chapters 8 to 14, deals with the present-day situation and the involvement of the European Union and the various Directives on the transport of livestock. Again the whole emphasis is on the need to ban the trade. In particular to change the trade in slaughter animals to a trade in carcase meat. The objective ‘animals to be slaughtered as near to the point of production as possible’ is emphasized.

In Chapter 10 the abolition of the trade in calves sold to veal producers in other Member States of the European Union where crates are used, is a clearly stated objective. Certainly there would appear to be an illogicality in the export of calves for veal production in crates, when the use of such crates has been banned in Great Britain since 1st January 1990. This Chapter also contains an interesting discussion on the meaning and intention of Article 36 of the Treaty of Rome, and its possible use by Member States to impose restrictions on imports or exports where these can be justified on grounds of ‘public morality, public policy . . . the protection of health and life of humans and animals . . .’. It is Peter Stevenson’s intention that this Article would allow the UK Government to prohibit this trade. The Government’s counter-argument is that Article 34 of the Treaty specifically prohibits restriction on exports to other Member States.