



Open letter on the commercial slaughter of pregnant cows in Aotearoa

SIGNED BY OVER 10,000 PEOPLE

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To Hon Meka Whaitiri, Associate Minister of Agriculture (Animal Welfare) and the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

At every stage of life, animals deserve to be treated with compassion and dignity. We are deeply concerned about the ethics of a practice occurring in slaughterhouses across the country called foetal calf bleeding.

Cows are being killed whilst they are still pregnant, with the blood from their unborn calves drained and sold for export. After a pregnant cow is killed, her unborn calf is removed from her body, a needle is inserted into their heart without pain relief and their blood is drained. This blood is spun down to produce foetal bovine serum (FBS) and used in cell culture.

There are already ethical, animal-free alternatives to FBS, some of which have been shown to perform more effectively for its scientific applications. As a country that values animal welfare, New Zealand should be taking the lead in pursuing scientific advancements that reduce animal suffering.

Transporting cows during pregnancy can increase their risk of suffering from thermal stress, dehydration, injury and early delivery. These cows, some of whom are in late pregnancy, can be confined and made to stand for long periods of time. In 2021, the Ministry for Primary Industries issued 72 fines after cows gave birth on slaughter premises. We are concerned that farms are subjecting cows to unnecessary distress to profit from them when they are at their most vulnerable.

Transporting and killing cows during pregnancy should not be accepted as standard practice.

On behalf of over 10,000 people, we ask you to prohibit the commercial slaughter of pregnant cows in New Zealand.. This would simply require farms to conduct more thorough pre-transport welfare assessments and ensure that farms are not artificially inseminating 'cull' cows.

We are calling on you to demonstrate your commitment to animal welfare in Aotearoa and take swift action on this matter to protect mother cows and their calves.

For the animals,



Debra Ashton
Chief Executive Officer
SAFE For Animals

Read more about this issue here.



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