

Vytenis Andriukaitis

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 170/Wetstraat 200
1049 Bruxelles/Brussel
Belgium

Regarding: Imports of kangaroo meat in the EU

Brussels, 24 May 2018

Dear Commissioner Andriukaitis,

We are writing to you today as a follow up to the meeting that we had with DG TRADE and DG SANTE regarding the imports of kangaroo meat from Australia into the EU and the conditions in which those kangaroos are hunted and processed. On behalf of our 62 member organisations, we would like to express our deep concern about the unsustainability and cruelty of this practice, which could raise as well serious health concerns for EU citizens. As a strong supporter of public health and animal welfare, we call on your support to tackle the serious issues by considering trade import restrictions.

First, please allow us to outline the huge animal welfare issues at stake. As kangaroos are nocturnal animals the shooting takes place at night, far away from any scrutiny, when non-lethal shots are inevitable, often causing horrific injuries. Up to 40% of kangaroos that are commercially killed are not shot in the brain, as required, but in the neck or in the body¹. In 2015, this represents up to 652,839 animals². This is without counting the many ones that are hurt and escape only to die suffering sometimes for weeks.

¹ Ben-Ami, D, K Boom, L Boronyak, C Townend, D Ramp, D Croft and M Bekof, 2014. The welfare ethics of the commercial killing of free-ranging kangaroos; an evaluation of the benefits and costs of the industry. *Animal Welfare* 2014, 23: 1-10

² Australian Government Kangaroo and wallaby population, quota and harvest statistics 2015 (2016 not available) <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/natives/wild-harvest>

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Due to the obscurity, shooters also have difficulties differentiating between genders and many females end up shot, taken for a young male. In such case, the national Code of Practice call on shooters to “crush the skull and destroy the brain” of joeys that could be left in the female pouch. According to research, this is mostly done by swinging their heads against a vehicle³. If they do not endure this cruel and violent death, many joeys are simply left in the field and are likely to die from exposure, starvation and predation. Deaths of joeys are not recorded but were reported to amount at least to 110,000 in 2015, which is probably under the real number.⁴

Second, there is a risk for the conservation of the four hunted species. The shooting of kangaroo kills around three million kangaroos a year⁵, making it one of the widest massacre of terrestrial mammal in the world. While the kangaroo is seen as a pest by Australian farmers, analysis have shown that there are flaws in the survey method used by the government leading to an inflation of the population estimates, on which a 15-20% quota is defined⁶. In addition, this quota is higher than the maximum wild population growth rate in optimal conditions, which has been calculated at only 10%. Already, local and regional extinctions have been observed throughout the country.

Finally, there are serious public health issues involved in the kangaroo meat trade. Kangaroos are butchered in the field, without supervision, by untrained shooters, and transported, sometimes all night long, in unrefrigerated open trucks exposed to dust, flies and often high temperature. Commercially killed kangaroo species harbour multiple pathogens including salmonella spp and toxoplasmosis. They frequently experience mass mortality events in the wild due to known and unknown pathogens⁷. There have been repeated

³ McLeod, S and Sharp, T Improving the humaneness of commercial kangaroo harvesting 2014 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation <http://www.agrifutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/publications/13-116.pdf>

⁴ Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy, Population, quota and harvest statistics, 2015. <http://bit.ly/2kYGkNk> Joeys calculated using standard constants for fecundity (Dawson 2012) and survivorship (Arnold (1991), Banks (2002))

⁵ State Kangaroo Management Plans:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/trading/commercial/management-plans>

⁶ Cairns, S et al A report to the New South Wales Department of Environment and Climate Change on the consultancy: 'Kangaroo Monitoring: Hunter and Central Tablelands Commercial Harvest Zones Design and Analysis of Helicopter Survey (2009); Cairns S & Bearup D A report to the NSW OEH on the consultancy: Design and analysis of helicopter surveys of kangaroo populations in the Central tablelands North & South management zones (2012);

⁷ Speare R, Donovan JA, Thomas AD, Speare PJ. 1989. Diseases of free-ranging Macropodoidea. In: Grigg G, Jarman PJ, Hume I, editors.

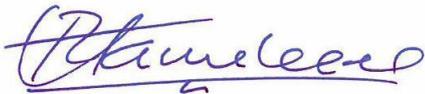
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findings of contaminated kangaroo meat in Australia,⁸ and even in Europe. In the Netherlands, only a few weeks ago, a large supermarket took off their kangaroo meat of the market due to salmonella-contamination.⁹ Tests in Australia have shown high level of salmonella, E.coli, toxoplasma gondii or a routine use of acetic acid to hide the systemic contamination of the meat.¹⁰ In 2014 Russia banned kangaroo meat imports for the third time due to pathogenic contamination.

In light of the public health and welfare concerns, Eurogroup for Animals calls on your support to investigate the possibility to introduce an import ban on all goods derived from the hunting of kangaroos. We would be delighted to provide you with any further information on this dossier, including meat contamination reports.

We would like to thank you in advance for taking this dossier seriously and look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours sincerely,



Reineke Hameleers

Director of Eurogroup for Animals

⁸ Rural, Regional Affairs & Transport Legislation Senate Committee, Department of Agriculture, Exports Division, Q104 (Senator Lee Rhiannon), Supplementary Budget Estimates May 2017, Australian Senate. http://bit.ly/KangaroosAtRisk_EUContamination2013-15

⁹ <https://www.sligro.nl/nieuws/waarschuwing-kangoeroe-bout-bief-2-x-100-gram-art.nr.-001942.htm>

¹⁰ Ben-Ami, Des Sibra, Boom and Obendorf (in press). A survey of the microbial contamination of retail ready kangaroo meat in Australia. Holds et al., 2008.