

Dr Lynn Simpson
BSc (Veterinary Biology), BVMS, MVSc
(Veterinary Epidemiology/Surveillance)
Ex- Live Animal Export Shipboard Veterinarian

Email: lsimpson_5@hotmail.com

Address: POB, 454, Hall,
ACT, Australia 2618

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Minister of Agriculture, Uri Ariel
Minister of Health, Yaakov Litzman

By email: Uria@Knesset.gov.il / ylitzman@knesset.gov.il

Dear Ministers,

I am a Veterinarian with extensive experience with the Live Importation of livestock such as cattle and sheep to Israel from Australia.

I have delivered many shipments of live animals to Israel on different ships, for different companies. I feel it my professional 'duty of care' to warn Israel and the Israeli public in general, of the potential danger of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) risk from consuming imported live animals transported by sea.

AMR occurs when microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change in ways that render the medications (antibiotics/ antimicrobials) used to cure the infections, ineffective.

When the microorganisms become resistant to most antimicrobials they are often referred to as "superbugs". A "superbug" causes great danger to public health and health systems- this is a growing global problem.

The Microorganisms (Superbugs/resistant microorganisms) become resistant to routine medications and leave Doctors and Veterinarians with limited if any way to treat these infections. It is a real global concern that AMR death rates may soon exceed deaths from cancer.

Our best anti microbial medications cannot fight "superbugs".

"Superbugs" (resistant microorganisms) can transfer to humans from contaminated food preparation areas, utensils, undercooked/raw foods or by close contact between humans and or animals.

The AMR risks are with all shipments. Animals tend to get stressed in the overcrowded, unhygienic environment of the ships used for export. As such many animals will develop illnesses. These illnesses must be treated during the voyage to reduce disease spread and death rates.

Unfortunately the ships provide an added risk of inappropriate use of anti microbial medications, hence increased risk of AMR development. This is due to medications being administered to the animals by stockmen without Veterinary qualifications, and by Veterinarians such as myself, due to the lack of diagnostic facilities on the ships. This results in guesswork with medication: further increasing AMR development.

Due to this risk I would not permit my ship crew to eat animals that may be affected, and I personally avoided eating any red meat in countries that import live animals.

The validity of this last statement was reiterated when I was in a butcher shop in Haifa and saw a large piece of meat for sale that had an injection mark and radiating medication distribution that is only caused by the types of medication guns we used daily on our ships.

The poor hygiene on the ships results in the crew being unable to record which animals are medicated and how many animals have ingested secondary doses of medication from the sewerage contamination consumed via water/ feed troughs as well as self cleaning themselves with their tongues. The lack of recording animal identification results in animals being consumed before the medication may have cleared their systems, this is called a withholding period (WHP).

WHP's are crucial in the 'meat' processing industry worldwide to provide a high level of confidence that drug consumption and AMR development risks are minimized. WHP's are not usually considered with live imported animals as medication use and contamination data cannot be given with confidence.

As such I believe Israel, (and all countries that import live animals for consumption) is at great risk of exposing its population to contaminated meat/ meat products and thus AMR infections.

Not importing live animals for consumption could reduce the serious public health risk of AMR's.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Dr Lynn Simpson

I have provided some links to further information below for your benefit.

1. Splash247.com: Live animal export: contributing to the global development of superbugs?
2. New York Times: Health leaders must focus on the threats from factory farms
3. Vet Practice Mag: Vets critical in the fight against antimicrobial resistance