



MEDIA RELEASE
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Animal welfare on board the MV Becrux under the camera's microscope

The general public will gain an even greater insight into the inner workings of the live export trade when Channel Seven screens another episode of its Mighty Ships series on Sunday night.

This week's episode focuses on the MV Becrux (now called the MV Ocean Drover), Wellard's state of the art livestock carrier, as it transports 16,000 cattle from Darwin to Jakarta.

Filmed by Discovery Channel, the Mighty Ships series documents the operations of some of the world's largest and most sophisticated vessels, from icebreakers, aircraft carriers and oil tankers through to the MV Queen Mary 2.

Two cameraman, two sound technicians and a director were provided unrestricted access to the MV Becrux throughout the loading, the four day journey from Darwin to Jakarta and discharge to provide 'a warts and all' account of what happens on the vessel on a typical voyage.

There is also considerable attention provided by the documentary makers to Australia's stringent pre-export process.

Wellard Executive Director Steve Meerwald said Wellard and Siba Ships agreed to the Discovery Channel's request to film on board the Becrux on an "access all areas" basis due to the confidence they had in the vessel and its crew.

"As viewers will see on Sunday night, every system, every process and every decision on board the Becrux is made to enhance the safety and welfare of the livestock and the vessel's crew," he said. "The crew and stockmen genuinely care for the animals under their watch and actively manage the livestock on board, as they do on each vessel we operate"

"The general public is constantly bombarded with various claims about the live export trade. They can watch this episode and judge for themselves just how the livestock are handled and cared for on board."

Mr Meerwald said two new ships to be launched by Wellard this year, the MV Ocean Swagman and the MV Ocean Outback, would provide even greater levels of sophistication and technology to enhance animal welfare.

“We are constantly researching and improving every process along the live export chain to ensure livestock, whether they are sheep or cattle, arrive at their destination fit and healthy,” he said.

Coincidentally, the Ocean Drover has this week loaded another 12,000 cattle in Darwin, almost two years to the day since the voyage along the same route was filmed by the Discovery Channel.

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Background – Wellard Rural and Trading

Wellard Rural and Trading is the Wellard Group’s agriculture and international trade division.

Its two largest subsidiaries are, Wellard Rural Exports, Australia’s largest livestock exporter and ship owner, and Wellard Agri, a mixed farming land owner and operator specialising in the production of grains, legumes and livestock.

Wellard Rural Exports has supplied quality Australian dairy and beef cattle and sheep and goats to the world for 30 years, and its investment in the live export industry is without peer. Based in Fremantle, the company’s operations cover every aspect of the export chain, including feed milling, road transport, feedlot facilities throughout Australia and modern shipping.

The company’s flagship carrier, the MV Ocean Drover (formerly the MV Becrux), is a purpose-built livestock carrier capable of carrying 75,000 sheep or 18,000 cattle from Australia to major markets around the globe. She was commissioned in 2002.

Its other vessel, the MV Ocean Shearer (former the MV Stella Deneb) can carry 125,000 sheep or 23,000 cattle, or a combination of both.

Two new vessels, the MV Ocean Swagman and the MV Ocean Outback, are due for launch in 2010. In August 2008 Wellard and Siba Ships announced a US\$250 million contract to build an additional two new livestock vessels which will be able to carry 17,000 cattle or 70,000 sheep or a combination of the two.

Wellard Agri owns and operates seven farms across two agri-hubs, one located at Watheroo in Western Australia’s central midlands and one located at Kojonup in the Great Southern region of WA.

Its total landholding is more than 18,000 hectares, of which 14,000 hectares is cropped to a variety of grains and legumes. The remaining land is devoted to sheep production, including the famous Hyfield Poll Merino stud at Kojonup.

In November 2009, Wellard Agri announced it was entering the farm machinery sector, when it commenced management of the CLAAS Harvest Centre at Katanning for the Landpower range of farm machinery.

For more information visit: www.wellard.com.au