

Compassion in World Farming  
211 e. 43rd St., 7th Floor  
New York, NY 10017

August 22, 2024

The Honorable Josh Green  
Governor, State of Hawai'i  
Executive Chambers  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania St.  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Governor Green,

We, the undersigned organizations, on behalf of our supporters in Hawai'i and throughout the United States, are writing to express our concern over the export of live cattle and calves from Hawai'i to the US mainland.

As you may be aware, every year cattle producers on the islands ship tens of thousands of live calves, some barely weeks after having been weaned from their mothers to ports on the west coast of the continental United States. The journey across the Pacific takes approximately five days<sup>1</sup> and can be even longer if the animals are first transferred between islands via trucks and barges.

The calves face rough seas in winter and high temperatures in summer. Qualified veterinary care is not compulsory on these long-haul journeys. Sick cattle are only treated "if feasible" according to guidelines produced by the Hawai'i Cattlemen's Council and decisions related to the disposal of bodies at sea are left to the ship's captain. Independently verifying the number of injuries and deaths on board is not possible because producers and shippers are only "encouraged" to record losses every six months.

As many as 80 newly weaned calves are crammed into custom-modified 40-foot containers, known in the industry as "cowtainers." The animals have as little as two inches between their heads and the ceilings. After boarding in Hawai'i, the animals face a long journey from Honolulu to ports on the west coast of the United States such as Oakland, CA, and Seattle, WA, around 2,500 miles away. From the coast, the animals may be transported to feedlots as far as Texas for fattening and finishing.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Guidelines for the Interstate Shipment of Stocker Cattle," Prepared by the Hawaii Cattlemen's Council Animal Health and Wellbeing and Transportation Committees, (Approved) January 15, 2020, available at <https://www.hicattle.org/Media/HICattle/Docs/guidelines-for-interstate-shipping-approved-jan-2020.doc>

<sup>2</sup> "Shipping Cattle to the Mainland," Drovers, December 6, 2014, available at <https://www.drovers.com/news/shipping-cattle-mainland>

The only known academic study of conditions inside these cowtainers documented the calves lost around 7% of their weight as a result of their journey.<sup>3</sup> Most of this shrinkage is tissue loss. During this study of 48 cattle, two showed signs of pneumonia and one of the calves died. Many of those who survived the journey demonstrated stress related to heat and handling because of loading and unloading, which have been identified as a major contributor to poor welfare and premature death.<sup>4,5</sup>

Despite exporting around 95% of calves born and marketed in Hawai'i to the US mainland, only around 10% of beef consumed in Hawai'i is produced locally, the rest is imported.<sup>6</sup> The export of live cattle to the mainland followed by the import of out-of-state beef, rather than raising and slaughtering the animals locally, presents obvious efficiency and environmental concerns in addition to animal welfare concerns.

For these reasons, we urge you to act to ban the live export of cattle and calves from Hawai'i to the mainland for fattening and finishing and encourage a reduction in the consumption of beef and other animal protein in Hawai'i to help combat the livestock sector's contribution to climate change.

The governments of New Zealand, Great Britain and Australia have recently led the way in banning certain live exports. For the sake of the animals crossing the ocean in "cowntainers" and the sake of building a more sustainable, local food system in Hawai'i, we urge you to join them by ending the interstate export of live cattle.

Please contact Ben Williamson at [ben.williamson@ciwf.org](mailto:ben.williamson@ciwf.org) with any comments or questions.

Sincerely,

Compassion in World Farming

Animal Rights Hawai'i

Aloha Animal Advocates

Leilani Farm Sanctuary

Animal Rights Initiative (based in Waikiki)

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<sup>3</sup> "Evaluation of Long-Haul Shipping Stress for Beef Calves Transported from Hawai'i to Washington or California and their Ability to Recover," The FSAEB Journal, Sy, T, Richards, T, May 2015, available at <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/items/edfea9d8-17bb-4d9f-b405-60273bb9f355>

<sup>4</sup> "Welfare of cattle during transport," EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW), September 2022, available at <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7442>

<sup>5</sup> "Are regulations addressing farm animal welfare issues during live transportation fit for purpose? A multi-country jurisdictional check," The Royal Society, January 2024, available at <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rsos.231072>

<sup>6</sup> "Livestock Harvesting Volume 1 Part B Appendix A," Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, March 2021, available at <https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/arm/files/2022/11/Livestock-Harvesting-Volume-I-Part-B-Appendices.pdf>