

‘Disturbing’ covert footage shows baby goats screaming in pain as horn buds burnt off with hot iron

Confronting Australian-first footage of baby goats screaming and struggling as their budding horns are burnt off with a hot iron has been released this morning by animal protection organisation, Aussie Farms.

The anonymously-supplied footage was captured in recent weeks at Lochaber Farm, a large intensive goat dairy in Meredith, Victoria, owned by the popular Meredith Dairy brand.

The practice, known as ‘disbudding’, aims to prevent the growth of the goats’ horns and is performed on days-old females (‘doe kids’) who are intended to join their mothers in the breeding and milking cycle. Though clearly cruel, disbudding is common on Australian goat farms and legally permissible due to an exemption for commercially-farmed animals in Victoria and other states’ animal welfare legislation.

Aussie Farms is calling on the Victorian government to remove this exemption.

The footage comes less than a month after the animal agriculture industry colluded with the national charities regulator, the ACNC, to strip Aussie Farms of its charitable registration and related tax concessions.

Quotes attributable to Alix Livingstone, Operations Director of Aussie Farms:

“This is just another well-kept industry secret that, as usual, has fallen on activists to expose. Self-regulation does not work, it’s time for our state governments – starting with Victoria – to take responsibility and close the legal loopholes that allow these and other horrible things to happen every day in Australian farms and slaughterhouses. Goats and other ‘livestock’ animals are no less capable of feeling pain and fear, no less capable of suffering, than our dogs and cats, and it’s time they were given the same protection under the law.”

“Businesses that use and exploit animals should no longer be able to do so in secrecy and legal immunity. Increasingly we’re seeing attempts by state and federal governments to stifle this kind of footage and information, to stop it reaching the consumers who unknowingly pay for this cruelty, yet there are no attempts to address the real issue of legalised and systemic abuse.”

RSPCA’s position

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-dairy-goat-farming/>

“The best way to avoid this painful procedure is to breed goats without horns (known as polled). Polled animals are less likely to hurt or injure other animals, are less likely to hurt or injure themselves and are easier to handle. Where horns need to be removed, disbudding by a competent operator using a disbudding iron is the preferred option. As this is a painful procedure, a local anaesthetic must be given prior to disbudding each horn bud and pain relief must be given immediately following the procedure.”

Footage and further information

A copy of the footage is available for viewing and use here:

<https://vimeo.com/379205824> (5 minute edit)

<https://vimeo.com/379214536> (2 minute edit)

<https://vimeo.com/378939249> (media edit)

Photos and additional information are available at www.aussiefarms.org.au/campaigns/goat-disbudding.

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