

Under Fire Report: Page 1

A Viva! Report on the Killing of Kangaroos for Meat and Skin

by Juliet Gellatley BSc (Zoology), Founder & Director of Viva!

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Viva!'s campaign to stop the kangaroo massacre is supported by more than 40
Australian animal welfare and wildlife groups

Introduction

Imagine this. A mother kangaroo, grooming her beautiful joey at night in the vast wild outback, hears the sound of a four wheel drive and stands transfixed, sensing danger. Searchlights are shone at her. A man takes aim, supposedly to shoot her in the head - but blows a hole in her neck. She falls in pain, helpless to save her joey who retreats into her pouch. But there's no escape. The hunter pulls the joey out of his mother's blood spattered body, tosses him to the ground and stamps on his head. He writhes in agony and is left to die. (Older joeys who frantically hop away when their mothers are shot, have no chance of survival. They die a slow, lonely death from starvation or cold.)

The shot mother does not die instantly. She struggles as the hunter slits her leg open, thrusts a hook through it and hangs her upside down on a truck. She is knifed, gutted, her head, tail and legs tossed aside. This is the fate of Australia's national emblem.



Juliet Gellatley of Viva! meets an orphaned joey during a visit to Australia

The killing of Australia's kangaroos constitutes the biggest land wildlife massacre in the world, surpassed only by the decimation of the American bison in the last century. In its investigation, including trips to Australia in 1998, 2001 and 2002 by myself at the invitation of wildlife and animal protection groups over there, Viva! has made a series of discoveries which are amongst the most distressing it has ever come across.

Further, the killing is justified with myths. Traditionally the kangaroo has been seen as competition by farmers. Although this view can be proved to be mistaken, the Australian Government favours the landowner over wildlife. Doug Reilly, one of Australia's most respected and knowledgeable kangaroo experts, of Chinaman Creek Environmental Research Station, Winnowie Conservation Park, states: "To be able to undertake the largest wildlife slaughter in the world today it was necessary to undertake a long and sustained program of misinformation within Australia to convince the community that these animals are in plague proportions throughout the country areas. This was achieved by presenting the kangaroo as a 'resource' that needed to be exploited. There are many examples of this entrenched 'destruction culture' now being undertaken in Australia." (44)

This report examines the devastation wrought by the kangaroo industry. It exposes the threadbare science that the myths and half-truths proffered for the justification of

the killing is based upon. The time to protect the beautiful and unique kangaroo is here – I hope you will join us.

Juliet Gellatley, Viva!

The Export Trade in Kangaroo Meat and Skin

The official number of kangaroos set to be killed for export in 2008 is 3.7 million, slaughtered mainly for their skin and meat. Official statistics ignore the millions of joeys (young kangaroos) who also die when their mothers are shot, which vastly increases the true scale of the slaughter. When non-commercial and illegal kills are included, together with the large number of road kills, the figure could be doubled.



Juliet Gellatley speaks on BBC Radio One and British TV at a London demonstration against kangaroo meat.

Viva! Ends the UK Trade

According to the Kangaroo Industry Association, 80 per cent of kangaroo meat sold for human consumption is exported overseas (45). Viva! ran a successful three-year campaign from 1997 to 2000 to stop the sale of kangaroo meat from supermarkets in the UK. Sainsbury's was the most determined to keep selling the meat and supplied it nationwide. It vigorously defended the trade but suddenly withdrew one week before Viva! was due to run another Day of Action outside its stores to highlight the suffering caused by the kangaroo killing. The Days of Action involved more than 100 local Viva! groups holding photocalls, demonstrations and talking to the public at any one time at stores all over the nation. Tesco withdrew from the trade after an extensive campaign by Viva!. Somerfield has refrained from introducing kangaroo meat in over 500 stores due to Viva!'s campaign and large contract caterers acknowledged Viva! as the reason they stopped selling the meat. The British public's support for Viva!'s campaign was huge, with many people refusing to shop at stores that sold kangaroo meat.

This quote from the Australian newspaper, Northern Territory News, shows the success of Viva!'s campaign:

'South Australia-based Australian Meats, one of five major exporters of kangaroo, said that the ban on the sale of meat in Britain had destroyed its \$1 million a year export business. The company handed back their export licence and Dennis Grantham, the manager said:

“We have stopped production altogether to Britain... we were exporting close to 400 tonnes of kangaroo meat a year. The decision has also affected our exports to other countries including the US.”

Further, the Australian meat industry complain in the food press (*Food Processor*, April/May 1998) (1):

“When Viva! successfully lobbied Tesco in the UK to remove kangaroo meat from sale, the deputy prime minister and primary industries minister contacted the chairman of Tesco to plainly state that kangaroo meat production meets every required standard. But despite the intervention Tesco still pulled the meat from sale.”

This illustrates the level of support that the kangaroo industry has in Australia, with politicians at the highest level supporting the killing.

The Australian Government failed to persuade the British public to support its massacre of kangaroos for meat and so is actively turning to other markets - eg Asia, the USA, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and EU countries such as Germany, France, Belgium and Holland.

In recent years, detailed figures have not been made public but an overview of the kangaroo industry by the Australian Government body the RIRDC (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation) shows that the major importing countries for kangaroo meat are the Russian Federation (74 per cent of the total in the three years up to 2004), Papua New Guinea (five per cent), France (four per cent) and Germany (four per cent). In the same time period, the export market for pet food was worth \$330,000 (Aus), with the major markets being Macau, the United States and Indonesia. In total, Australia exported 9.5 million kg of kangaroo meat (inclusive of pet food) and 1.7 million kangaroo skins in 2004 (71).

Kangaroo Products and Value

The use of kangaroo meat for human consumption has only been legal in South Australia since 1980. In other Australian States the sale of kangaroo meat other than for pet food was not allowed until 1993 when it was legalised in New South Wales. At the same time, mutual recognition legislation came into being, under which products permitted for sale in one state cannot be disallowed in another, making the sale of kangaroo meat in all States possible from that time.

As seen above, kangaroos are killed commercially for their meat and skin. Traditionally, their skin has been used to make football boots and their meat used in pet food. John Kelly of the Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia says:

“Many people don’t realise that most of the goals kicked in world class soccer are kicked with kangaroo leather.”

Viva! wonders why the sports shoe companies have not promoted this fact and aims to promote it for them.

It seems ironic that Australians don’t like kangaroo meat and consistently reject it for human consumption. This is partly why the industry is concentrating its efforts on

exporting the country's wildlife for meat. The industry boasts it has found new markets in Russia, Romania and Serbia where kangaroos are reduced to salami and sausages. Other parts of the kangaroo are made into such essential items as bottle openers (paws), wall mounts (heads), purses (scrotum) and golf bags (skin).

The gross value of production of the kangaroo industry was an estimated \$37.6 million (Aus) in 2004 (71) (which reflects the total amount paid to kangaroo shooters at the meat processing plant gates).

The industry claims that it employs 4,000 people and is worth in total Australian \$200 million (26). This figure does not account for the government support it has received.

Kangaroo meat exports (2001*)

Russia	857272 kg***
France	486862 kg
Netherlands	130689 kg
Germany	125264 kg
Macau	82992 kg
Belgium	72406 kg
Austria	56502 kg
Czech Republic	51807 kg
Spain	34043 kg
Singapore	34000 kg
Malta	20000 kg
South Africa	18278 kg
Vanuata	17500 kg
Papa New Guinea	17017 kg
Indonesia	16750 kg
China	16373 kg

UK	8500 kg
USA	5517 kg
Portugal	3754 kg
Bulgaria	2615 kg
Japan	1841 kg
New Caledonia	1818 kg
Switzerland	1100 kg
Italy	200 kg
Hong Kong	85 kg
Total kg	2063185 kg

Source: Environment Australia.
Latest detailed figures available*

****From the August 1, 2009, Russia has banned the importation of all kangaroo meat because of food safety fears. This could be a fatal blow for the kangaroo industry. Russia was its biggest market, taking 70 per cent of exports and being worth AUS\$190 million. Some in the kangaroo industry have bemoaned that this will make the price of kangaroo meat virtually worthless. However, around the same time a deal has been struck to allow China to start importing kangaroo meat. This has led to fears that as one market is closed another, potentially even bigger, will open up. A source from the kangaroo industry has stated that the market in China could potentially be so huge that demand could outstrip supply. This could spell disaster for Australia's iconic animal.*

Tax Payers Fund the Kangaroo Killing

In 1999 the Australian Government's Ministry of Agriculture launched an initiative to help fund the development of the kangaroo industry. It is administered by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and over half its funds are from tax payers and the rest from industry. The industry is supposed to competitively bid for funding, however information provided to Animals Australia and the Australian Wildlife Protection Council under Freedom of Information legislation shows that decisions on who gets the R&D funds are effectively made by the Kangaroo Industry Association!

Jobs for the Boys

The RIRDC makes its decisions on funding of kangaroo industry projects by taking advice from the Kangaroo Industry Advisory Council (KIAC), whose chairperson is nominated by the Kangaroo Industry Association (29)! KIAC's other members are representatives of kangaroo meat production/marketing; kangaroo human consumption, meat production and marketing and kangaroo skin production and marketing. There is a single non-industry representative - the RIRDC member of the New Animal Products Program, whose aim is to 'accelerate the development of viable new animal industries'.

One example of a grant - the industry received \$170,000 in 1999 to 'improve' kangaroo leather. Minutes of a meeting of the KIAC (24/3/2000) show that a proposal by John Kelly of Lenah Game Meats for funding for 2000/2001 'to improve the kangaroo industry image' was accepted for funding. RIRDC approved a grant of \$18,500 with a similar amount to be provided by the industry (29).

Kelly is the Development Manager of the Kangaroo Industry Association and its president is Ray Davis. Davis was also the chair of the KIAC when the grant for Kelly was approved.

Kelly states that tax payers money is being used to "improve public perception of the environmental wisdom, sustainability and responsible controls of the kangaroo harvest, leading to improved sales". He also says: "Ongoing public upimaging of the kangaroo industry is necessary to counter the continued efforts to denigrate it by radical animal liberationists." (29)

Australia's then federal agriculture minister, Warren Truss, actively promoted the kangaroo killing. He declared in a media release of 13 June 2001:

"I refute claims by animal welfare lobbyists that kangaroos are harvested inhumanely and that their meat is unhealthy." (30)

He further claims: "Kangaroos are harvested by licensed shooters with a strict code of practice that was produced with the assistance of animal welfare groups." (30)

The umbrella group for animal organisations, Animals Australia, responds: "We were asked to comment on the Code about 11 years ago - not one of our proposals was taken up! The Code is not enforced, nor enforceable in remote outback regions.

Kangaroos often suffer and many will die in agony. The industry is the shame of Australia."



In 2006, 3.8 million kangaroos were earmarked for slaughter by the Australian Government; this figure did not include baby joeys, illegal kills, roadkill and non-commercial killings

Which Kangaroos are Killed Commercially?

It is often a surprise to people first studying the kangaroo debate that (according to 2005 statistics) the industry kills six species of kangaroos and wallabies commercially.

Kangaroos/wallabies are commercially killed in five States ie Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania (17, 32). Other States allow lesser killing by land owners for 'damage mitigation', but do not allow larger scale killing for meat/skin. Red Kangaroos, Eastern Grey and Western Grey Kangaroos make up 95 per cent of the kill for export (32).

Commercially killed animals are:

Name of Species	States where killed
Red Kangaroo (<i>Macropus rufus</i>)	Qld, NSW, SA, WA
Eastern Grey Kangaroo (<i>M. giganteus</i>)	Qld, NSW
Western Grey Kangaroo (<i>M. fuliginosus</i>)	NSW, SA, WA
Wallaroo or Euro (<i>M. robustus</i>)	Qld, NSW, SA,
Bennetts Wallaby (<i>M. rufogriseus</i>)	Flinders Island, Tas
Tasmanian Pademelon (<i>Thylogale billardierii</i>)	Flinders Island, Tas

Qld=Queensland

NSW=New South Wales

SA=Southern Australia

WA=Western Australia

Tas=Tasmania

John Kelly of Lenah Game Meats, Tasmania, boasts: "Ours is the only state that harvest wallaby, 'the veal of kangaroo'. Lenah wallabies are all taken from pasture rather than the bush and are no more than three years old." (Mercury, 5 August, 1998)

The Law Governing the Kill

Under Australian law, the individual States have responsibility for wildlife management within their state boundaries, whereas the export of all wildlife and wildlife products falls under the provisions of the Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Imports and Exports) Act 1982 with Environment Australia administering the Act and giving advice to the relevant federal minister (32).

In reality, Australian wildlife groups say that Environment Australia (EA) does not protect wildlife - but does the opposite. EA implements legislation designed to ensure that kangaroos are killed, 'harvested' and exported. This total exploitation of kangaroos provides a financial profit for Australians prepared to accept the needless killing of the species.

Those scientists who advise the minister for EA make sure that there is no voice for the welfare of kangaroos, tourism or scientists that argue against the 'cull'. The Australian Wildlife Protection Council says of the EA: "The disregard for important stakeholders like the \$6 billion nature-based tourism industry, and breaches of ecological and scientific oversight are indeed very serious. In reality, Environment Australia does not provide legislation to protect kangaroos and no one accepts responsibility for cruelty to them." (See section Enforcing the Code on page 13.)

Legal kangaroo commercial kill quotas 1975 to 2006:

1975	885,000
1980	2.9 million
1990	3.9 million
1998	4.1 million
1999	5.7 million
2000	5.5 million
2001	5.5 million
2002	6.9 million
2005	3.9 million
2006	3.8 million
2008	3.7 million

THESE QUOTAS ARE FOR EXPORT ONLY AND DO NOT REPRESENT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF KANGAROOS KILLED. (Note that the kangaroo industry quote these commercial killing figures for export as if they were the total kill.)

How Many Kangaroos are Killed?

The general trend since the early 1970s has been a steady increase in the number of animals killed commercially, from 885,000 in 1975 to 3.7 million in 2008.

In addition, millions more animals are legally killed non-commercially. The extent of the non-commercial kill can be shown by the Tasmanian wallaby kill figures, where more than one million animals were shot in one year non-commercially - when the

official quota was set at 250,000. In 1986, the Queensland Government stated that the legal non-commercial kill in addition to the quota was 500,000. By 1991 a Queensland National Parks and Wildlife officer estimated that: "One million kangaroos are shot annually in that state in addition to the commercial quota."

The illegal kill is also not accounted for in the quota figures; nor are the joeys in the pouches and young at foot who always die when their mothers are shot.

According to the Australian Wildlife Protection Council:

"...the number of kangaroos and wallabies actually killed each year is as high as TWICE THAT OF THE FEDERALLY SET COMMERCIAL QUOTA."

In other words, in 2006, the Government set official quota for the number of kangaroos to be killed at 3.8 million; in reality millions more will be slaughtered.

Cruelty to Kangaroos

The following statement is typical of the Australian Government and multiple retailers that sold kangaroo meat in the UK and still sell it abroad:

Retailer: "the sale of kangaroo meat in no way causes undue stress to the animals".

Below, this report examines different aspects of animal welfare in relation to the kangaroo slaughter, in answer to statements released by Sainsbury's when they sold the meat and the Australian High Commission, UK.

Retailer: "The professional shooters involved in the cull are licensed and fully trained. They must comply with strict government laws demanding a code of conduct."

Kangaroos are supposed to be killed by licensed shooters who are supposed to understand a Code of Practice governing the killing. The statement above implies that all kangaroos killed for meat/skin are shot by professional shooters. This is not the case. In fact, according to the Australian Wildlife Protection Council, many shooters are itinerant part-timers. A pro-industry report confirms this, stating: 'Shooters are almost always self-employed' and they are mainly part-time because kangaroo products are 'low-value' (32).

In addition, the illegal trade supplies a substantial number of animals for meat/skin.

The Code the AHC and retailers refer to is the 'Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos' (31). However - the reason it is called a Code is because it is precisely that. It is a guideline for shooters to follow but lacks any clout in law. The National Kangaroo Campaign, Australia state:

"The Code is a voluntary code only and no provision exists in it for permits/licences to be suspended in the event of failure to adhere to the Code."

As of January 2006, the Code is still under review, but there is little optimism that any changes will result in welfare improvements.

The Code falls down badly in many areas and has done nothing to lessen the concern for the level of cruelty to kangaroos. For example:



Up to a million joeys are killed each year, discarded as 'useless' by-products of the kangaroo meat and skin industry

Joeys

The Australian High Commission, London, claims "the Government Code demands that joeys are put down immediately and humanely".

Mother kangaroos often have a joey in pouch and a joey at foot - neither can survive without her. The Code states that pouch young of a shot female 'must also be killed. Decapitation with a sharp instrument in very small hairless young or a properly executed heavy blow to destroy the brain in larger young...or by a shot to the brain' must be used. When I was in Australia, amateur hunters admitted to cases of joeys being used as footballs; to stamping on joeys' heads (but not killing them); to using crowbars or bashing their heads against a wheel brace or just leaving them to die.

(Even for those joeys which are dragged out of their mother's pouch and killed according to the Code's recommendations - I hardly think that the Commission's description of 'put down' conjures up the reality.)

The code does not even make a reference to how older joeys should be dealt with! They are completely dependant on their mothers for milk, warmth in the cold winter nights, protection from predation and emotional support. Without their mothers, they are left to die of starvation or cold or from predation (25).

Dr John Auty BVSc has studied the killing of kangaroos in all Australian States. He firmly maintains that:

"Shooters often have a thorough contempt of the law and the Code. They commit cruelty on a regular basis."

Dr Auty's credentials to speak on this subject are far more persuasive than Sainsbury's. He has post graduate qualifications in veterinary science and was chief agronomist in the Northern Territory; assistant director of the Australian Bureau of Animal Health and has worked in the outback for many years where he studied kangaroos.

Viva!'s research shows that the killing of joeys is obscene and unavoidably cruel.

Other failures of the Code to protect kangaroos include the fact that:

- Some firearms used are unsuitable eg shotguns and small rifles when used on wallabies are unlikely to cause instant death.
- Laws relating to the killing of kangaroos vary between States and some laws contradict the Code. For example, in Western Australia there is an open season where shooters can operate without a licence and do not have to stick to the Code.
- Most of all, wildlife authorities do not have the ability to enforce the Code. There are not enough staff to cover the vast distances and they rely on the shooters to keep them informed.

Source: National Kangaroo Campaign, Australia

Most telling is the Code itself, which states: 'No matter how carefully the shooter aims, some kangaroos will not be killed outright.' (31)