



Animals get raw deal

Just one inspector where there used to be six

By NARELLE TOWIE
 Environment Reporter

CRUELTY to livestock in WA is going unchecked since the State Government slashed the number of its inspectors to just one.

There were six specialist inspectors in the Animal Welfare Unit, but five contracts were not renewed for 2010.

Animal activists, who say they have filmed livestock workers breaking the law and treating sheep and cattle cruelly during transportation, say the job cuts are an outrage.

Now just two people — one inspector and one manager — are responsible for ensuring live-animal exporters and transport companies comply with animal welfare laws across the entire state.

Local Government Minister John Castrilli, whose department encompasses the Animal Welfare Unit, refused to be interviewed by *The Sunday Times* on the issue and questions had to be put in writing to his press officer, Carole Cowling.

Ms Cowling said it was the responsibility of individuals and companies associated with the live export industry to act responsibly and in accordance with the Act

and their licence conditions.

“There are over 200 general inspectors responsible for enforcing the Animal Welfare Act,” she said. “A formal agreement is in place between the Department of Agriculture, Food WA and the Department of Local Government in relation to assisting the Animal Welfare Branch in livestock welfare and investigation of complaints by providing specialist technical advice, services and facilities.”

But international animal welfare organisations dispute the claim.

Animals’ Angels spokeswoman Dawn Lowe, who is campaigning for better policing of the industry, said: “There are not 200 inspectors with animal welfare as their core focus.”

“There is just one full-time animal welfare inspector whose focus and job description is livestock. The bulk of the other inspectors are rangers with local councils. Their roles are very different, and the CEOs of the councils concerned do not permit their rangers to be full or even part-time animal welfare inspectors.”

Ms Cowling admitted the figure did include inspectors from a range of areas, including the De-

partment of Environment and Conservation which oversees native wildlife issues.

Ms Lowe said the DEC and the Department of Agriculture had their legislation to enforce and if she went to them with a livestock animal welfare problem they would simply direct her to local government authorities.

“If only it was true that there are 200 officers,” she said, “because when I’m down at Fremantle Port, or at saleyards or markets and there is a problem, I would possibly stand a better chance of getting some help.”

“At the moment no one comes to help because there is no one to ring .

“I’m a member of the public, I should not have to be doing the State Government’s job for them. In addition, misleading comments and no action by politicians result in the animals continuing to suffer and give politics a bad name.”

Ms Lowe said she had seen animals crammed in tiny pens with diseased limbs and heads poking out, which were then prodded with electric shocks. Some animals were filmed travelling for more than 72 hours without food or water.

■ Horse shame: Page 33