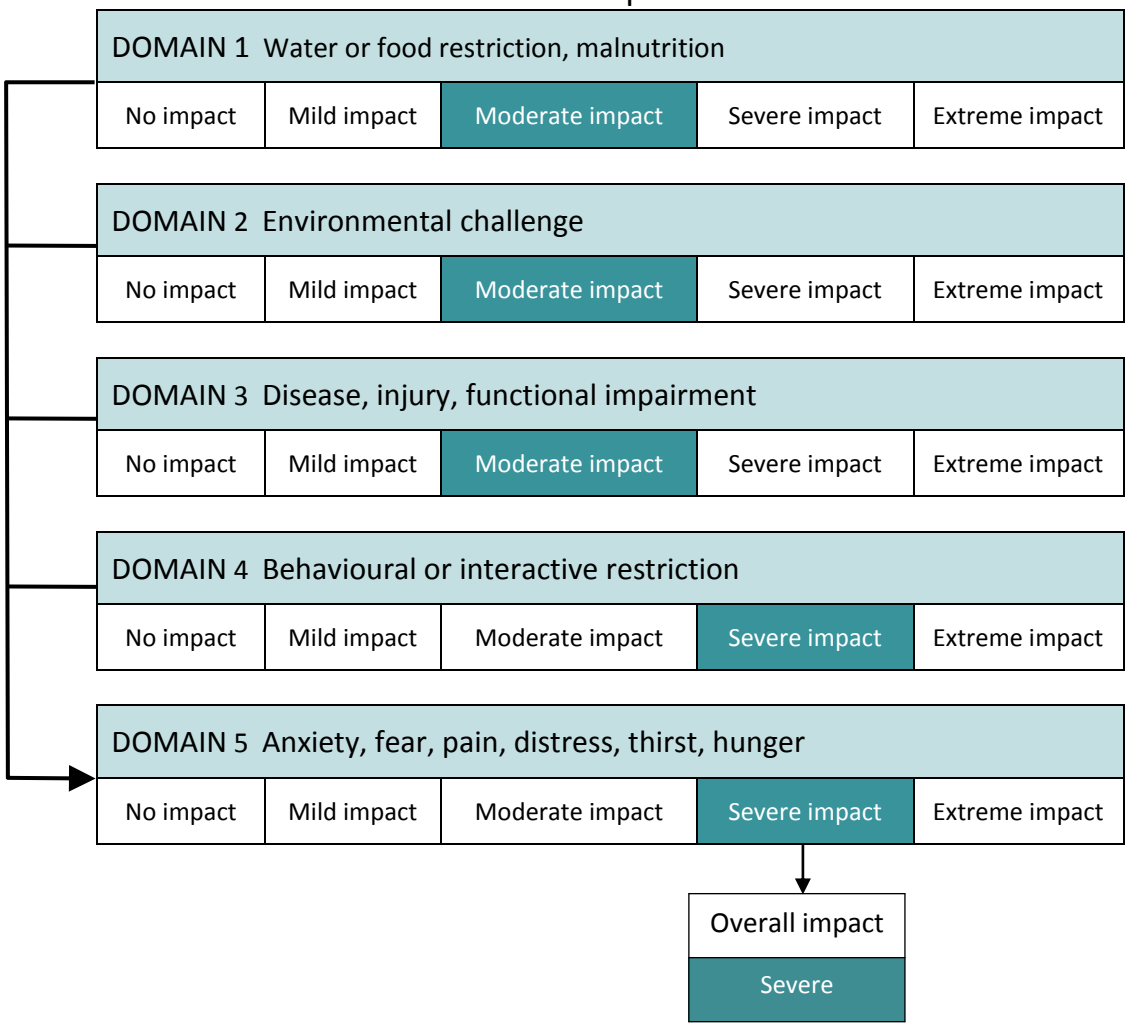
Control method: Loading and transport of feral camels

Assumptions:	• Best practice is followed in accordance with the standard operating procedure CAM003 Mustering of feral camels (http://www.feral.org.au/tag/camel-sop/) and the Australian Land Transport standards (http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/land-transport/). • The level of stress experienced by camels will depend upon how hard animals are pushed during loading and the distance transported. • The welfare impact on any dependent young will be severe to extreme if they not are loaded and transported according to the Land Transport Standards, which state that calves under six months old must *not* be deprived of water for more than 12 hours. If water cannot be provided then they must be humanely euthanased in the yard prior to loading and not left to fend for themselves. • A skilled operator, who holds an appropriate firearm license, is always readily available with a suitable calibre firearm to euthanase any injured and non-commercial animals. • Contingency plans are in place to care for animals in the case of a truck breakdown during transportation. • Removal of camels for slaughter or export is a multi-stage process. This assessment applies from when the camels are loaded for transportation to a domestic abattoir for slaughter (or port, for live export) to when they offloaded at their destination. Separate assessments have also been made for mustering; yarding and holding; and lairage and slaughter. The assessment of the impact of yarding and holding should not be considered in isolation from these other stages as the cumulative effects of these procedures will compound welfare impact.

PART A: assessment of overall welfare impact



DURATION OF IMPACT				
Immediate to seconds	Minutes	Hours	**Days**	Weeks

SCORE FOR PART A:	**7**

Summary of evidence:

Domain 1 Abattoirs that are licensed to process camels for slaughter (in Peterborough, SA and Caboolture, QLD) can be located more than 1000 kms from the remote areas where camels are normally mustered, therefore camels will not have access to food or water for around 48 hours or more during transport.

Domain 2 Although the trucks have open tops and camels are very robust, transportation for many hours in very hot conditions will result in some short-term heat stress.

Domain 3 The risk of injury with loading, transportation and offloading is high. If

	truck trailers are aligned poorly with the loading ramps or trailers are not purpose built for camels then injuries are more likely to occur
Domain 4	Behavioural restriction is severe with loading and transportation. Camels are pushed up loading ramps onto the truck, often with the aid a bull catcher vehicle and electric prods. The animals are confined for long periods of time so cannot perform normal range of behaviours.
Domain 5	Camels are likely to experience a severe degree of suffering and distress during loading and transportation. They will have previously had very little contact with humans, and will not be used to handling. There is a high potential for injury and animals are likely to experience fear and anxiety when forcefully pushed into the limited space of a trailer. They are confined for long periods during transportation and do not have access to food and water, sometimes during very hot conditions.

PART B: assessment of mode of death

Not performed – see assessment for slaughter

Summary

CONTROL METHOD:	**Loading and transport of feral camels**
OVERALL HUMANENESS SCORE:	**7**

Comments

A quantitative study has been performed on one group of feral camels (n= 187) to assess the procedure of loading them onto trucks (unpublished data, J. Hampton). The animals had been mustered >24 hours earlier and were allowed time to settle in the yards. Most of the animals were females, with an average estimated body weight between 300 and 400kg, and average body condition scores between 2 and 3. Only 2% (n=3) of animals were deemed to be under body condition score 1. Three separate trucks were used, each with 3 trailers, comprising 9 separate truck trailers. 22% (n=2) of the truck trailers present aligned poorly with the loading ramps, with the checker plates joining the two falling at a steep incline. Of the trailers used for transport, 67% (n=6) were purpose-built for camels, while 33% (n=3) of the trailers were not purpose-built and were hence prone to having animals' legs caught between rails.

The number of animals loaded onto each trailer varied from 18 to 23 animals. 13% (n=25) of animals fell on the ramp upon loading. A small number of animals (4 to 5) went down into recumbency once on the loaded trailer, causing the entanglement of a number animals (n=20) which required the trailer to be unloaded and re-loaded. No animals died or required euthanasia during loading. The presence of one dependent, juvenile animal was noted in the yards, apparently without its' mother. The SOP dictates that such animals should be euthanased, but this was not observed during the assessment.

In this study, the use of electric prods was observed for 69% (n=129) of animals. With several animals the electric prod was applied indiscriminately to sensitive areas such as the face or vulva. However, it was difficult to tell if the prod was energised for each touch, or if it was being used as a goad only (i.e. charge turned off).

There have been no comprehensive studies of the transport component of feral camel mustering in Australia however, observations of the condition of animals (see above) and trailers have been made at the point of loading. All trucks and trailers observed had suitable flooring, ventilation, vertical clearance and were free from potentially injurious protrusions (unpublished data, J. Hampton).

Studies undertaken overseas with dromedary camels have demonstrated that transportation causes stress that can alter numerous physiological variables such as cortisol and thyroid hormones[1] as well as increasing levels of stress oxidative markers[2].

Bibliography

1. Saeb, M., Baghshani, H., Nazifi, S. & Saeb, S. (2010). Physiological response of dromedary camels to road transportation in relation to circulating levels of cortisol, thyroid hormones and some serum biochemical parameters. *Tropical Animal Health and Production* **42**, 55–63
2. Nazifi, S., Saeb, M., Baghshani, H. & Saeb, S. (2009). Influence of road transportation during hot summer conditions on oxidative status biomarkers in Iranian dromedary camels (Camelus dromedarius). *African Journal of Biochemistry Research* **3**, 282–287