

ONLINE ARTICLE

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ANIMALS Australia has launched a scathing attack on the dairy industry demanding "a kinder future" for bobby calves.

The group is calling on consumers to boycott dairy products.

The attack comes as the industry readies itself to present and implement a new set of national standards for the time off feed and transportation of bobby calves.

Chair of animal health and welfare for producers' lobby group, Australian Dairy Farmers, David Basham, said the standards were developed to address a gap in the national guidelines for transport and treatment of bobby calves.

"There wasn't any national standard and industry and government believe it essential there is a maximum time off feed to protect calves from what is unreasonable," Mr Basham said.

"Research shows that up to 30 hours off feed has no adverse affect on welfare."

The research, carried out both in New Zealand and Australia by Dairy Australia, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, The University of Melbourne and The Animal Welfare Science Centre, showed that milk breaks down slowly in a calf's stomach and feeding a calf regularly (during transportation and prior to slaughter) could be more detrimental than beneficial, Mr Basham said.

"But, as usual, they (Animals Australia) just used the emotive language and pictures and ignored the science," he said.

"They would place similar standards on calves as they would humans."

The standards, outlined in Australian animal welfare standards and guidelines: land transport of livestock, are open for public consultation until February 3.

In advertisements placed in major metropolitan papers today, Animals Australia states: "Mother cows would normally suckle their young five times a day. If passed, this standard will compound the misery and suffering endured by hundreds of thousands of unwanted bobby calves each year."