

# Ag & Vet Weekly



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*All the news on ASX-listed agriculture and veterinary companies*

## AVW Editorial: How Good Is China Bear Baiting?

Ag & Vet Weekly avoids editorials – other than on corporate transparency as required – because we believe our readers are able to make up their own minds.

But, as a journal for the agriculture sector, it would be remiss not to comment on the debacle of Australia's relations with the People's Republic of China – our largest export market.

According to Prime Minister Scott Morrison's office, it was Foreign Minister Senator Marise Payne who started poking the bear, with a comment on a television program that she thought it a good idea to have an inquiry into the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

That the Minister was echoing the blame-shifting and dissembling by Donald Trump, the President of the United States of America, (the country with the highest death count) could not have been beyond her.

Unfortunately for Australian farmers, producers and exporters, Mr Morrison backed his Foreign Minister instead of choosing to err on the side of caution and quickly explain there had been an error of emphasis.

He could have said: "The world wants to know how this pandemic began to prevent another one and any assistance the excellent scientists of China may need, we shall be willing to assist. Should China require any support, we shall call on the World Health Organisation to assist as well."

Same message, but removing the spear in the flesh.

It got worse. Trade Minister Simon Birmingham weighed-in, for good measure.

We now have several tariffs on our previous \$1.3 billion barley trade with China. There are threats being made against beef and wine, and as I write, iron ore is being discussed as another pressure point for China to punish Australia. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website, at June 30, 2019, China accounted for 32.6 percent of all of our exports, totalling \$153.2 billion a year.

As if the worst bushfires in our history and a global pandemic weren't enough, we have crowned these crises with yet another disaster – and very much one of our own making.

It is possible to be a close trading partner of China and complain about its treatment of minorities, its lax patent infringement standards, its battalions of cheap labor and even its penchant for building military bases in the South China Sea. But a full-frontal attack is not the way to do it.

We are surprised that lobby groups have not spoken out against a government they effectively control through the National Party tail wagging the Liberal dog. One would expect the National Farmers Federation, the cattle, wine and milk lobbies to put their heads above the parapet and call for calm, and a few brighter cabinet Ministers.

Our Government has shown our major trading partner and the second largest economy in the world (we are number 13) the same contempt and hubris with which it treats its own citizens. That is not good capitalism.

**David Langsam**  
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