

THE METHANE MYTH



“The greenhouse effect of methane concentration is estimated to be 30 times that of carbon dioxide (CO₂)”

WRONG

Because that is warming comparing methane with CO₂.

What counts is the warming per year. The methane concentration in the atmosphere has been growing 265 times slower than CO₂ concentration.

• **This means methane's potential contribution to warming is only 10% of that for CO₂ not some 30 times or 80 times claimed by others.**

“Methane emissions have increased significantly with cattle numbers”

WRONG

Because despite a history of methane sources - including volcanos, natural gas facilities, livestock and the breakdown of plant matter including marsh gas and rice paddy fields - methane breaks down in the atmosphere and remains an insignificant greenhouse gas.

• With global cattle numbers remaining near one billion, there has been an increase in the methane level of only 0.2 parts per million (ppm) since 1980, when natural gas handling facilities were improved.

• Up to 50% or 0.1 ppm of the total methane increase since 1980 is attributed to livestock and rice paddy fields. Paddy fields contribute 10% of the 0.1 ppm and are considered a human source of methane. This leaves 0.09 ppm of methane attributed to livestock including cattle over the 42 years since 1980. With cattle numbers stable, a methane trend above past experience would be related to another source.

Conclusion

• There has been an insignificant increase in methane in the atmosphere of 0.09 ppm attributed to livestock, including one billion cattle, over the 42 years since 1980. Reduction in Australian cattle numbers of 25 million would have negligible impact on the methane level and on global warming.

• **It is a myth that policies to reduce livestock numbers are supported by scientific evidence justifying a claim of a useful climate benefit.**

• **Therefore, a tax on or reduction in livestock numbers and thus the availability of meat is not justified. The availability of meat and dairy products would be of particular concern as they provide a number of essential nutrients.**

The Climate Study Group