

**Submission
No 58**

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE PHASE-OUT OF
AUSTRALIAN LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS BY SEA ON NEW
SOUTH WALES**

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SUBMISSION

IMPACT OF THE PHASE-OUT OF AUSTRALIAN LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS BY SEA ON NEW SOUTH WALES

Thank you for the opportunity of making a submission.

I grew up on a beef and dairy farm in Victoria, and my family is totally opposed to live export on cruelty grounds. NSW does not export live sheep, so its farmers will not be affected by the phase-out in WA. Animal welfare is a matter of humanity; it is not a 'political' issue and should not be politicised by farmers and live exporters.

1. Animal suffering

A federal parliamentary library chronology (beginning 1885 and ending April 2019) details the death and suffering of countless animals transported by sea. The chronology ended in 2019 through a lack of funding – or perhaps political embarrassment - but the cruelty, suffering and deaths of live exported animals continues to this day. See the link below for the shame-file of live export.

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1920/Chronologies/LiveExport

The most basic animal welfare tenet is that humane slaughter of animals bred for human consumption **MUST** be carried out as close to the place animals are reared. Transport of animals for slaughter is humane only if the distance they travel to slaughterhouses is short.

As we have seen over many decades of disastrous sea voyages, and the un-stunned slaughter that is carried out in foreign lands, the risky live export of animals by sea to the northern hemisphere breaks every rule on the humane treatment of animals for slaughter. Despite years of research, heat stress is still a major cause of death and suffering for sheep and cattle. Sheep also suffer illness, starvation (because they won't eat unfamiliar food), injury, and sea sickness. In fact, despite so-called improvements, sheep still suffer and die on every live export ship voyage.

Despite new rules under ESCAS, which stipulate that sheep must be kept in approved supply chains, evidence is found every year by animal

welfare groups in exporting countries of sheep being sold for private slaughter. They are constrained by ropes in debilitating temperatures, dragged and mishandled, and eventually killed by untrained and unequipped buyers.

Yet wealthy live exporters, some with many regulatory breaches against them, escape licence suspension.

Australians want it to end; they do not wish to harm farmers; they want the cruelty to stop. And the Albanese government is offering millions of taxpayer dollars to help the WA live sheep export industry to diversify. Live sheep export has lost its social licence. The live sheep trade must end. The time has come.

Everyone I speak to about the cruelty of long sea voyages to the Northern Hemisphere has seen the footage of sheep suffering. Like me they invariably agree that it should end as soon as possible.

Some do not even believe the live exporters and farmers deserve to be subsidised with their hard-earned taxpayer dollars during the phase-out!

No-one can forget the scenes of gross and depraved cruelty on the *Awassi Express* in 2017. Evidence captured across five routine long-haul voyages revealed horrific conditions onboard, with sheep suffering severe heat stress and dying in their own faeces.

Approximately 2,400 sheep did not make it to port. They died of heat stress, some trapped in a bog of excrement - and someone on board filmed it to show what egregious cruelty is going on.

Every voyage is a lottery. As late as this year, the *Brahman Express* voyage to Indonesia caused the death of 100 cattle. This tragedy illustrates both the danger to animals and the futility of regulations to guarantee animal welfare. The regulations are totally inadequate.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-26/cattle-die-in-live-export-to-indonesia/103633064>

- 2. The distress of seeing farm animals so mistreated deeply troubles Australians and reflects badly on humane farmers who value animal welfare and treat their animals well – like my family.**

Animals suffer egregious harm on every voyage. The worst events are etched on the minds of all Australians. The *Awassi Express* tragedy of 2017 was one such voyage. In 2003 Saudi Arabia rejected the *Cormo Express* shipment of 57,000 sheep on grounds of scabby mouth. As a result, the sheep were shunted all around the Middle East in searing heat while live exporters sought a new market. Eventually the sheep that survived were off-loaded in Pakistan and slaughtered cruelly, because they were considered diseased.

One would have thought that with the impending phase-out, the farmers and live export companies would be on their best behaviour when it comes to animal welfare. But no! Another example of live sheep export cruelty occurred as late as February - this year. It reminded me of the *Cormo Express* disaster – and the shunting of sentient creatures like cargoes of concrete.

Despite the dangerous Houthi blockade of Red Sea shipping lines, the live exporters (approved by the Department of Agriculture) sailed *MV Bahijah* to the Red Sea. Ironically, the voyage was deemed too dangerous to send an observer on board!! Unsurprisingly the ship had to return to Fremantle. After many days waiting there in searing heat before unloading, the ship reloaded and re-exported the sheep around the Cape of Good Hope to Israel. Those sheep endured not one voyage, but three voyages! A massive breach of animal welfare.

The above shows how little regard the Department of Agriculture, the live exporters and farmers have for the animals they export live. See links below:

The gruelling ordeal for the sheep and cattle who have endured months of stress and suffering trapped inside the [MV Bahijah](#) is nearly over — but like all of live export's victims, there will be no happy ending for these animals.

The ship arrived in Israel on Saturday after its latest 34-day voyage at sea, *three months* after first leaving Australia. The animals onboard have then faced the additional stress of unloading, and further transport on land.
(Reference: Animals Australia website)

Charlie Peel, The Australian's rural reporter describes some of the events in the link below:

https://edition.pagesuite.com/popovers/dynamic_article_popover.aspx?artguid=66b72f31-e448-4e59-bf10-1b5b1e172f3f

3. Most of Australia's meat is exported chilled or frozen

This is a far more humane way than sending animals on long, dangerous, unpredictable sea voyages. Live exporters argue that the Middle East likes to have LIVE animals. However, Australia does not need to pander to the wishes of countries with a lower standard of animal welfare than ours. It is a disgrace that some farmers still think this is acceptable.

By far the most animal meat is slaughtered in Australia and then exported chilled or frozen. That is how it should be. It value-adds, and it provides work for Australians. Some Middle Eastern countries prefer receiving live animals so that they can reap the rewards of value adding; Kuwait even sells Australian sheep as sheep meat around other Gulf countries – so that Australia misses on the value-add.

Whenever one visits modern metropolises in the Middle East it is revealing to see chilled and frozen Australian-slaughtered animals packed into supermarket freezers. It gives the lie to the argument that the Middle East must live animals to feed its people. The younger middle east age group prefer packaged meat.

The old argument that these countries don't have refrigeration is a furphy; all the buildings in these prosperous countries are air conditioned and use refrigeration. They have sophisticated transport systems around the gulf.

4. Climate change and protein alternatives

Live export of animals is unsustainable as the earth heats. Ships use vast amounts of fuel.

Alternatives to meat are increasing. Plant-based foods, alt-proteins, cultivated meat and the CSIRO's precision fermentation are the way of the future. See link below:

<https://www.csiro.au/en/news/all/articles/2022/november/proteins-of-the-future-using-precision-fermentation-to-develop-new-ingredients>

Food Frontier is an innovative think-tank on alternative proteins. Its collaborators include Austrade, Good Food Institute, Grains and Legumes Nutrition Council, Cellular Agriculture Australia, Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology, and Food Industry Foresight.

At Food Frontier's October AltProteins Conference (Australia and New Zealand) Andy Jarvis, Director of Future of Food at the Bezos Earth Fund is a keynote speaker on food innovation and sustainability. See the link below for more information about the emerging opportunities for farmers:

<https://www.foodfrontier.org/>

The Food Frontier conference is supported by Agriculture Victoria, Global Victoria, Invest Victoria, CSIRO and many other groups. See link below:

<https://www.foodfrontier.org/altproteins-conference/>

5. Countries that are ending live exports

In the UK a new ban on exporting live animals came into law on 20 May 2024 as the Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Act received Royal Assent ... bolstering the UK's position as a world leader in animal welfare standards.

New Zealand's move to end live exports by sea has been met with positive outcomes for animal welfare and the industry alike.

In April 2023, a Brazilian judge banned live cattle exports from all the country's ports. This momentous ruling may be appealed by the Government, but it followed a lawsuit by the National Forum for the Protection and Defence of Animals. The judge, Djalma Gomes, said *"Animals are not things. They are sentient living beings... individuals who feel hunger, thirst, pain, cold, anguish, fear."*

Globally, live export is on the way out as animal sentience is recognised.

6. Conclusion

Live export of animals is something poor countries do, because they lack the opportunities and research capability of Australian entrepreneurs.

Australia is setting a bad example to the rest of the world by continuing to allow cruel live export of its sentient farm animals instead of being clean, green and innovative.

Jan Kendall
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