



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Live Export Trade – Middle East

#### **Why does Australia continue to send live exports to the Middle East?**

The live animal export trade contributes significantly to regional and rural Australia and is a valuable alternative to domestic slaughter because it opens market opportunities. For example, a study (Hassall & Associates Australia, 2006) has shown that the live animal export industry contributed \$830 million in value of livestock and almost \$1 billion in wages and salaries, per year, to the Australian economy between 2001 and 2005.

Some markets prefer to import live animals rather than frozen or chilled meat for cultural, religious and practical reasons, including the lack of suitable storage and chilling facilities in remote locations. If Australia withdrew from live exports it is unlikely an increased trade in meat would result. It is likely that there would simply be an increase in exports from other countries where animal welfare is given a much lower priority.

While remaining sensitive to cultural differences with our trading partners, Australia's involvement in trade with the Middle East provides us with the opportunity to influence change and improve animal welfare conditions there. We lead the world in animal welfare practices and it is therefore important that we assist other countries in this area when invited to do so.

The Australian Government takes animal welfare matters seriously and recognises these matters are directly linked to good animal health, production and commercial success. The Government has implemented legislation that provides stronger regulatory framework for the livestock export industry. This includes a requirement to comply with the new Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock which is available at [www.daff.gov.au/livestockexportstandards](http://www.daff.gov.au/livestockexportstandards). This legislation is a major step in the efforts by the Government to overhaul the livestock export trade.

A recent comparison of animal welfare standards in countries exporting livestock has highlighted that the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock*, which cover animals from the point of sourcing to the port where they are offloaded in the importing country, are world's best practice. The Australian regulations require exporters to have a vet on the ship who must file daily reports on the welfare of animals.

#### **Does the Government tolerate animal cruelty?**

The Australian Government does not tolerate cruelty towards animals and will not compromise on animal welfare standards.

Australia leads the world in animal welfare practices. Our ongoing involvement in this trade provides an opportunity to influence animal welfare conditions in importing countries.

#### **What action has the Government taken to address live export trade animal welfare concerns?**

The Australian Government and the livestock export industry continue to work hard with overseas countries to improve animal welfare practices.

Following the broad ranging investigation in 2003 into Australia's livestock export industry chaired by Dr John Keniry, the Government announced initiatives to improve animal welfare conditions in the livestock export trade. Part of this response is a \$4 million investment to, amongst other things, help improve animal welfare practices in importing countries.

The Government has also introduced legislation that provides stronger regulation of the livestock export industry. This includes a requirement to comply with the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock. This legislation is an important step by the Government to overhaul the livestock export trade. These new arrangements acknowledge that community concerns about animal welfare are an important consideration if the livestock export trade is to be sustainable.

Australia is the only country that requires specific animal welfare outcomes for livestock exports. Our ongoing involvement in this trade provides an opportunity to influence animal welfare conditions in importing countries.

The Government and the livestock industry are working to improve the welfare and treatment of animals exported from Australia and better results are already apparent. Cattle mortalities decreased from 0.34 per cent of stock shipped in 1999 to 0.17 per cent in 2006. Sheep mortalities followed a similar trend, decreasing from 1.34 per cent to 0.90 per cent over the same period. The Government is determined to implement further improvements.

The Government and the livestock export industry are working cooperatively with our trading partners to address post-arrival welfare concerns to improve the transportation, handling and slaughter practices of livestock in overseas markets.

Australia has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with eight countries in the Middle East and North Africa region and negotiations continue with other trading partners in the region. A key element of the MOUs is that animals be unloaded on arrival regardless of their health status. The MOUs also allow us to help our trading partners improve post arrival handling and slaughter through cooperative activities based around improving animal welfare.

### **What has the livestock export industry done to improve animal welfare in importing countries?**

While these countries have different cultures and laws to Australia, we can and do work with our trading partners by sharing our experience and technologies in delivering good animal welfare outcomes. There have been significant improvements to the receipt, handling and processing of Australian livestock overseas.

These improvements include:

- the installation of equipment to improve slaughter practices
- the permanent basing of a vet in the Middle East whose responsibilities include animal health and husbandry practices, training, technical advice and service, and
- training activities by Australian animal welfare experts to improve unloading, transport, animal nutrition and feedlot and abattoir management of animals.

### **Why can't the live export trade be completely replaced with chilled or frozen meat?**

Suggestions that the live trade could be completely replaced by chilled and frozen meat fails to take into account the requirements of the market. Whilst Australia has developed a significant trade in meat products, the lack of refrigeration and cold chain facilities, as well as strong cultural

preferences for freshly slaughtered meat precludes Australia from servicing all of its export markets with processed meat products.

### What is the value of the live export trade (Generally)?

- Australia is one of the largest export suppliers of livestock to world markets
- It generated almost \$750 million in direct export earnings in 2006
- Specifics in Australian dollars by species:

	<b>Live Sheep (\$m)</b>	<b>Live Cattle (\$m)</b>	<b>Live Goats (\$m)</b>	<b>Total Value (\$m)</b>
<b>2003</b>	342.15	486.18	12.39	840.72
<b>2004</b>	228.96	447.57	4.68	681.21
<b>2005</b>	280.58	407.48	5.08	693.14
<b>2006</b>	293.4	447.8	7.17	748.37

Source: ABS

### How many cattle, sheep and goats are exported from Australia?

- In 2006
  - 623,052 cattle
  - 4,158,671 sheep
  - 21,693 goats

### What countries does Australia export live cattle and sheep to?

Australia exported livestock to more than 30 countries in 2006.

Sheep to:

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, territories administered by Palestine, Ukraine, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, New Zealand, Vanuatu, Brunei, China, Japan, USA, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Philippines

Cattle (including breeding stock) to:

Qatar, Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, territories administered by Palestine, Mauritius, Kuwait, Mexico, Hong Kong, China, India, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, USA and Russia.

### What would be the effect on Trade if Australia were to withdraw from live exports?

Domestically, if the live trade ceased, the drop in sheep and cattle prices and the loss of revenue to producers and their regional communities would be significant. The live trade currently supports about 12,000 jobs in regional and rural Australia.

### Why does Australia need to be in the market to be able to make a difference?

Australia leads the world in animal welfare practices. Our ongoing involvement in this trade provides an opportunity to influence animal welfare conditions in importing countries. If we pull out, the live export trade will continue – from countries without the animal welfare standards that we are providing. Other suppliers into this market do not have Codes or legislation covering their trade nor do they provide assistance or technical advice into the market on animal welfare. Simply turning our back on the challenges and issues surrounding animal welfare in the Middle East will

not make them go away. We are committed to working cooperatively with these cultures to change animal handling practices for the better.

**Where can I find out more information?**

More information about the live export trade is available on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website, [www.daff.gov.au/livetrade](http://www.daff.gov.au/livetrade).