

# **AUSTRALIAN POSITION STATEMENT ON THE EXPORT OF LIVESTOCK**

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# 1 Introduction

The *Australian Position Statement on the Export of Livestock* (the Position Statement) has been developed as part of the Australian Government's response to the *Livestock Export Review* (Keniry Review<sup>1</sup>) of the livestock export industry.

The Position Statement provides a framework for the development of the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock*<sup>2</sup> (the Standards). Development of the Standards followed guiding principles and defined outcomes for the livestock export industry, as agreed through the consultative process employed to finalise the Standards. The Standards represent the basic animal health and welfare requirements for the conduct of the livestock export industry, which the Australian Government expects the industry to meet.

The Standards are referenced in the Australian Meat and Livestock Industry (Export Licensing) Regulations 1998 and the Export Control (Animals) Order 2004, which came into effect on 1 December 2004. These Australian Government laws cover only the exporter, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS)-accredited veterinarians, the registration of premises, and processes relating to the livestock export trade. The Standards are relevant throughout the livestock export chain and should be reflected in relevant industry quality assurance (QA) programs.

Only exporters licensed by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) can legally export livestock from Australia. Exporters are accountable to the Australian Government for the outcomes of each consignment. AQIS must be satisfied that importing country requirements are met before issuing a health certificate and export permit.

Livestock sourced for export must also meet all requirements under relevant state and territory legislation, including animal welfare Acts. State and territory governments are responsible for ensuring that these requirements are met. Areas of state and territory responsibilities include animal health and welfare, vehicle registration and operation, licensing and operation of facilities and equipment where appropriate, occupational health and safety, and environmental protection and operation of companies.

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[http://www.daff.gov.au/corporate\\_docs/publications/pdf/animalplanthealth/animal\\_welfare/keniry\\_review\\_jan\\_04.pdf](http://www.daff.gov.au/corporate_docs/publications/pdf/animalplanthealth/animal_welfare/keniry_review_jan_04.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.daff.gov.au/livestockexportstandards>

Figure 1 is a risk-based framework for the health and welfare of livestock in the live export chain.

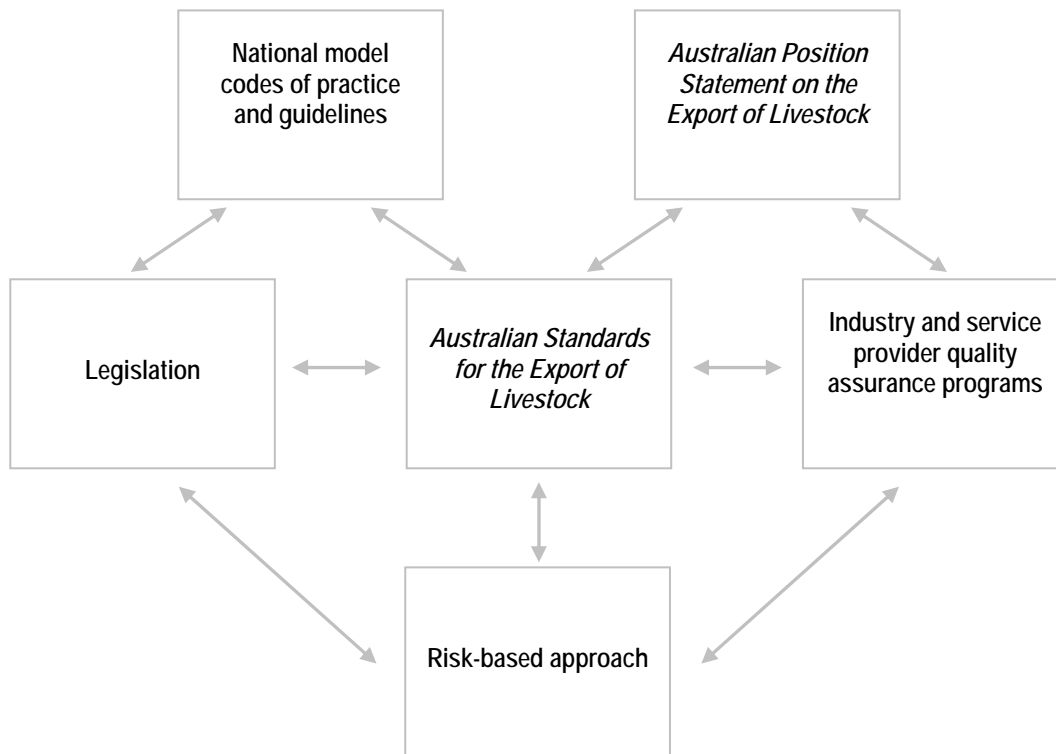


Figure 1 Risk-based framework for the health and welfare of livestock in the live export chain

## 2 Purpose

The Position Statement provides:

- an Australian Government statement of guiding principles and minimum recommended animal health and welfare outcomes for animals in the livestock export industry
- a basis for the development of the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock*
- an Australian approach that is consistent with that taken by international bodies, such as the World Organisation for Animal Health<sup>3</sup>, involved in determining criteria for the health and welfare of livestock.

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<sup>3</sup> Formally the Office International des Épizooties (OIE)

## **3 Scope**

### **3.1 Operating environment**

Currently, Australia is the largest exporter of livestock in the world, with exports providing a valuable market for Australia's livestock producers. Australian exporters are faced with a range of challenges, such as the large distances from most export markets. These challenges have the potential to affect the health and welfare of exported animals adversely if the associated risks are not properly managed.

The export of animals obliges all participants in the trade to ensure that the animals' health and welfare is protected to the greatest extent possible and reflects Australian community expectations. The health and welfare of livestock in the live export chain should be protected by:

- industry QA programs from place of origin to destination
- state and territory legislation, including animal welfare Acts
- Australian Government legislation, including the Standards.

The live export industry is an international trade in which the commercial parties negotiate the detailed specifications of individual consignments. The Australian Government provides the legislative and administrative framework in which livestock exporters, operators of registered premises and accredited veterinarians are licensed and regulated. State and territory governments provide and administer animal welfare legislation, which applies to all participants in the live export chain.

Relevant national Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals (codes) are developed by Australian Government and state and territory government representatives in consultation with farming industries and animal welfare organisations, including RSPCA Australia. Currently, under state and territory animal welfare legislation, it is not a legal requirement to comply with most codes. However, some state and territory animal welfare legislation provides a defence to a person charged under the Act if they are complying with a relevant code.

The aim of the codes is to provide guidelines for the humane and responsible treatment of livestock in Australia. The codes cover both animal husbandry and transportation. Livestock industries implement these national code requirements through industry QA programs.

The government of the importing country sets its own requirements in regard to the import of livestock.

### **3.2 Whole-of-chain approach**

To minimise the chance of an adverse animal health and welfare outcome during the live export process, a whole-of-chain risk-based approach must be adopted. This is to ensure that critical risks are identified, their potential impacts analysed, and risk management measures developed and implemented. The livestock export chain is summarised in Figure 2.

1. Planning the consignment	Planning begins well before the export consignment and covers the entire live export chain, from preparation and sourcing of the livestock in Australia until the livestock have been unloaded in the importing country. Planning also includes the development of contingencies in the case of unexpected threats to the health and welfare of the livestock.
2. Sourcing & on-farm preparation of livestock	The livestock exporter sources livestock in Australia that meets Australian and importing country health, welfare and commercial requirements. This may necessitate specific on-farm preparation of animals, including husbandry and animal health tests and treatments.
3. Land transport	The initial land transport phase commences when the first animal is loaded onto a vehicle at the property of origin and ends when the last animal is unloaded at the premises approved or registered by AQIS. A second phase of land transport commences when the first animal is loaded onto a vehicle to leave the premises and ends when the last animal is unloaded at the embarkation port. Where the property of origin is also the premises, the land transport phase commences when the first animal is loaded onto a vehicle and ends when the last animal is unloaded at the embarkation port.
4. Pre-embarkation assembly	The pre-embarkation assembly of animals for export commences with the unloading of the first animal from the vehicle at the approved or registered premises and ends with the loading of the last animal onto the vehicle for departure from the premises, whether or not the animal is passed as fit for export.
5. Vessel preparation and loading of the vessel	Vessel preparation includes selection and preparation of a suitable vessel to transport livestock overseas. Loading of the vessel is said to commence with the arrival of livestock at the port of loading. Loading ends when the last animal has been loaded onto the vessel and an export permit and health certificate is issued by AQIS. Loading includes an inspection of the livestock for health and fitness to travel at the port, before the animals are moved onto the vessel.
6. Sea/air voyage	On-board management covers the period from the time the first animal is loaded onto the vessel until the time the last animal is unloaded at the final port of disembarkation.

7. Disembarkation (discharge or unloading)	<i>Disembarkation commences after the arrival of the vessel at the first overseas port (and acceptance of the consignment, or part thereof, by the competent authority of the country). It commences with the unloading of the first animal and ends when the last animal is unloaded from the vessel. The Australian Government's jurisdiction over the animals ceases when disembarkation is complete.</i>
8. Post-disembarkation	<i>After disembarkation, the health and welfare of the livestock is the responsibility of the importer, under the authority of the importing country. The Australian Government and the Australian livestock export industry are committed to furthering the health and welfare of livestock in importing countries. Improvements at all stages of the livestock handling chain are being achieved by the fostering of cooperation and goodwill, the sharing of Australian technical expertise, the provision of educational and training opportunities, and support for infrastructure.</i>

Figure 2 The livestock export chain<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Not all steps are applicable for all species and purposes

For each consignment, Australian Government legislation requires the livestock exporter to undertake adequate planning encompassing a thorough risk assessment and development of appropriate risk mitigation measures. The planning must cover the sourcing, land transportation, treatments and inspections before export, and specific plans to manage the animals' health and welfare during the journey from Australia to the importing country, whether by air or by sea.

For the export of livestock by sea, the mechanism to achieve this is the submission by the exporter to AQIS of a notice of intention (NOI) to export, and a consignment and risk management plan (CRMP). The Approved Export Program (AEP), which details any particular treatments or inspections deemed necessary by AQIS that must be carried out by an accredited veterinarian, is then provided by AQIS to the livestock exporter. Exporters are required to prepare the animals in accordance with the approved CRMP, the AEP and the Standards.

## **4 Australian animal health and welfare requirements**

### **4.1 The Australian animal health and welfare system**

All livestock for export must meet the Australian animal health and welfare system, which consists of Australian Government legislation, including the Standards, the codes, state and territory legislation, and animal health and welfare policies. In accordance with this system:

- livestock entering the live export chain must be raised under conditions that are consistent with good animal husbandry practices
- there must be processes in place to allow livestock in every consignment to be identified and traced if necessary and to ensure that any disease, abnormality, condition or treatment of livestock that could adversely affect fitness for export is identified and acted on
- livestock management practices, farms of origin, and registered premises and equipment must be operated and maintained to ensure the health and welfare of livestock in the live export chain.

### **4.2 International requirements**

The importing country determines animal health and any other requirements for imported livestock, and may advise the Australian Government of these from time to time. Although the livestock exporter is responsible under Australian Government legislation for compliance with these requirements, any negotiation on the requirements is undertaken at a government-to-government level. AQIS provides a health certificate and an export permit when it is satisfied that the livestock for export meet the requirements of the importing country.

The OIE establishes international animal health guidelines, and has recently developed animal welfare guiding principles that are relevant to the export of livestock. The Standards developed in Australia take into account OIE animal welfare guidelines and in most instances exceed these.

## 5 Guiding principles

The guiding principles that apply to the export of livestock from Australia are listed in Box 1.

### Box 1 Guiding principles for the export of Australian livestock from Australia<sup>5</sup>

- The health and welfare of animals is a primary consideration at all stages of the livestock export chain.
- All participants throughout the livestock export chain are responsible for the health and welfare of animals in their care.
- The operation and regulation of the livestock export industry is conducted in a transparent manner, in which accountabilities, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and met.
- Animal health and welfare requirements that apply to the livestock export industry are consistent with those applying to other livestock industries in Australia.
- Participants in the livestock export industry are demonstrably competent and operate in accordance with the national animal health and welfare system in an environment that encourages sustainable improvement.
- Livestock export consignments from Australia meet the requirements of the national animal health and welfare system and importing country requirements.
- The export of livestock requires a risk-based approach throughout the export chain and development of appropriate risk minimisation strategies.
- The Australian Government and the Australian livestock export industry remain committed to furthering improvements in the health and welfare of livestock in the live export chain in Australia, including by supporting relevant research and development initiatives.
- The Australian Government and the Australian livestock export industry remain committed to furthering the health and welfare of livestock in importing countries by fostering cooperation and goodwill, sharing Australian technical expertise, providing educational and training opportunities, and supporting infrastructure.

## 6 Responsibilities

The following sections outline the responsibilities of the key participants in the live export industry in Australia, including the exporter, government, livestock organisations, accredited stockpersons, AQIS-accredited veterinarians and live export chain service providers.

### 6.1 The exporter

The exporter must comply with the Australian animal health and welfare system, including all Australian Government and state, territory or local government laws that apply to the health and welfare of livestock in a particular jurisdiction. The exporter is also responsible for ensuring that importing country requirements are met and that verification systems are established to meet audit scrutiny throughout the livestock export chain. Where the exporter subcontracts to service providers, the exporter is responsible for instructing the service provider to comply with the

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<sup>5</sup> For details of the national animal health and welfare system for the livestock export industry in Australia, including the Standards, see <http://www.daff.gov.au>

Standards and importing country requirements, and to ensure that all of the above requirements are met.

In particular, the exporter must source suitable livestock that meet consignment specifications, such as species, class, condition, animal health and welfare status and number of livestock. The exporter must also ensure sufficient livestock services are maintained throughout the voyage and on-board care and management of the livestock is adequate to maintain animal health and welfare. To achieve this, the Standards prescribe that the exporter must engage an accredited stockperson and, when required, an accredited veterinarian (see also Sections 6.4 and 6.5).

The exporter is also responsible for ensuring that livestock are loaded in a manner that prevents injury and minimises stress by providing competent animal handlers and suitable loading facilities.

In addition, the exporter must ensure that stocking densities meet all relevant requirements and that there is adequate provisioning of the vessel before departure, including feed, water and veterinary supplies.

The exporter must be able to demonstrate that the preparation and loading of livestock at the port of embarkation have been conducted in accordance with the approved loading plan, and any importing country requirements, and in compliance with the Standards and any requirements of the relevant state, territory and local governments.

## **6.2 Government**

The three spheres of government in Australia have animal health and welfare responsibilities that include the development, review, administration and enforcement of laws that relate specifically to livestock for export and generally to livestock in Australia.

The Australian Government is responsible for export policy, regulation of the live export industry, including licensing livestock exporters, inspection and health and welfare certification of livestock for export, and issuing export permits and health certificates. This includes ensuring exporters, operators of registered premises and accredited veterinarians comply with the Standards. Under its legislation, the Australian Government is also responsible for the development of the Standards, and ensuring the effectiveness of the Standards in achieving their aims of acceptable animal health and welfare outcomes by regular review that involves stakeholders.

State and territory governments have responsibility for ensuring that livestock producers and exporters comply with relevant state and territory legislation, including animal welfare Acts.

Local governments are responsible for some areas of animal health and welfare in some jurisdictions. Governments communicate and share relevant information across relevant jurisdictions when issues arise.

There are formal consultative processes between the three spheres of government to promote consistent national regulation and administration of the Australian health and welfare system relating to livestock for export.

### **6.3 Livestock organisations**

Livestock industry organisations are responsible for developing and managing QA systems to help their members meet the Standards and other relevant legislation. Livestock organisations also provide training for personnel in the livestock industry and provide accreditation for stockpersons travelling on live export vessels (see also Section 6.4).

Livestock industry organisations are also responsible for identifying research and development initiatives, and promoting a culture of sustainable improvement in animal health and welfare outcomes.

### **6.4 Accredited stockpersons**

LiveCorp-accredited stockpersons are employed by the exporter as outlined in the Standards and are responsible for reporting on the health, welfare and mortalities of livestock during the export voyage in the absence of an AQIS-accredited veterinarian.

### **6.5 AQIS-accredited veterinarians**

AQIS-accredited veterinarians are AQIS-approved non-government veterinarians who deliver contract veterinary services to exporters. They are responsible to the exporter for delivering veterinary treatments and animal preparation under an AEP, in accordance with relevant Australian and importing country requirements.

In addition, where an AQIS-accredited veterinarian is required to accompany the consignment, that person is responsible under Australian Government legislation for the monitoring and regular reporting to the Australian Government of consignment conditions on board from loading to disembarkation. This includes reporting on the health, welfare and mortalities of livestock during the export voyage.

### **6.6 Live export chain service providers**

Live export chain service providers are responsible for delivering a range of services under instruction from the exporter in accordance with the Standards, from planning a consignment to disembarkation. Providers include livestock producers, livestock transport operators, feed suppliers, stock agents, stock owners, stockpersons and stevedores.

The Master of the Vessel assumes overall responsibility for the management and care of the livestock during transport on the vessel.

Livestock handlers have a responsibility for the humane handling and care of livestock, especially during loading and disembarkation. Service providers must comply with all relevant legislation of state, territory and local governments.

## **7 Reporting and monitoring**

### **7.1 Consignment outcome and reporting**

The Standards prescribe that the outcome of each consignment must be reported by the exporter to the Australian Government. Data reported for each consignment must be accurate and reliable and include the health, welfare and mortalities of livestock during the export voyage, conditions on board, epidemiological data and other relevant information. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry must report to both houses of parliament every six months on the outcomes of each livestock voyage by sea, based on information reported to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority by the master of the live export vessel.

### **7.2 Review of the Standards**

The export of livestock must be undertaken in accordance with the Standards. The Australian Government will periodically lead a process to review the Standards to ensure they reflect the *Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals* latest knowledge in risk management, scientific research findings and improved management systems that relate to the health and welfare of livestock in the export industry.

### **7.3 Incident response arrangements**

The nature of the livestock export industry means that adverse incidents may occur that have the potential to impact on the health and welfare of a large number of animals, particularly when a vessel is at sea. Exporters must prepare contingency plans to deal with the possibility of such incidents, which also have the potential to affect adversely the livestock export industry and Australia's international reputation.

The Australian Government has developed a Live Animal Export Incidence Response Plan, which provides a framework for consultation, coordination of incident management between the three spheres of government and industry, and decision-making processes in the event of an incident involving live animals en route from Australia. This plan provides for the involvement of appropriate government and industry organisations and effective and efficient resolution of incidents.

## **8 International cooperation**

### **8.1 Disembarkation and subsequent animal handling**

While remaining sensitive to cultural differences with our trading partners, Australia's involvement in the live export trade provides Australia with the opportunity to influence change and improve animal welfare conditions in the Middle East and other export destinations.

One of the initiatives to improve animal welfare practices in importing countries has been the facilitation by Australia of agreements within the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East and the Gulf Cooperation Council, to develop regional and subregional strategies for improving animal welfare. These agreements are the result of improved collaboration between Middle East countries and Australia on post-arrival animal welfare. The Gulf Cooperative Council strategic

plan to improve animal handling and transportation is the first out of all the OIE Regional Commission countries to develop a plan on how they will strive to meet the OIE animal welfare guidelines.

The Australian Government has recently signed memoranda of understanding (MoU) on the live animal trade with the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Eritrea, and is in negotiation with Egypt, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Syria and Iran. The purpose of the MoU is to protect the health and welfare of the animals by agreeing to the conditions under which the trade in live animals can be undertaken. Key provisions contained in the MoU include assurances that live animals will be off-loaded on arrival, either in the normal manner or if there is a suspected problem, into a quarantine zone for further inspection and testing before a final decision is made on the future of the animals. This guarantees that animals will not be left on vessels for protracted periods beyond the normal shipping time for the journey.

## Acronyms

ACCL	Australian Certificate for the Carriage of Livestock
AEP	approved export program
AMSA	Australian Maritime Safety Authority
APAV	Accreditation Program for Australian Veterinarians (coordinated by Animal Health Australia)
AQIS	Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, a business unit within the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
CRMP	Consignment Risk Management Plan
DAFF	Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry
LESAC	Livestock Exports Standards Advisory Committee
MoU	memoranda of understanding
NIO	notice of intention
OIE	Office International des Épizooties (World Organisation for Animal Health)
QA	quality assurance

## Glossary

Accredited stockpersons	Stockpersons who are accredited by LiveCorp for the shipboard husbandry of livestock.
Approved export program	Details any particular treatments or inspections deemed necessary by AQIS, which must be carried out by an accredited veterinarian.
AQIS-accredited veterinarian	A veterinarian who is accredited by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) to carry out duties in relation to the export of livestock.
Disembarkation	Disembarkation commences after the arrival of the vessel at the first overseas port (and acceptance of the consignment, or part thereof, by the competent authority of the country). It commences with the unloading of the first animal and ends when the last animal is unloaded from the vessel.
Export permit	A permit issued by the Secretary under the Export Control (Animals) Order 2004 to export live animals from Australia.
Health certificate	A certificate issued by an authorised officer under the Export Control (Animals) Order 2004 stating that the animals to which the certificate relates meet importing country requirements relating to health.
Keniry Review	<i>Livestock Export Review — A Report to the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, 23 December 2003.</i>
Live Animal Export Incidence Response Plan	A framework for consultation, coordination of incident management between the three spheres of the Australian Government and industry, and decision making in the event of an incident involving live animals en route from Australia.
LiveCorp	A non-profit livestock exporter industry body.
Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals	A set of guidelines providing detailed minimum standards for assisting people in understanding the standard care required to meet their obligations under the laws that operate in Australia's states and territories.
Registered or approved premises	Premises registered for the export of livestock by sea and approved by AQIS for the export of livestock by air, for holding and assembling of livestock for export, for pre-export quarantine or for isolation of livestock for export.