

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

EXPORT OF LIVE SHEEP FROM AUSTRALIA

Report by the  
Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare

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Report approved by the Committee on 20 June 1985

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAHQS	-	Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service, (formerly ABAH)
ABAH	-	Australian Bureau of Animal Health (now AAHQS)
ABS	-	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACTU	-	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AFAS	-	Australian Federation of Animal Societies
AFIC	-	Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
ALEA	-	Australian Livestock Exporters Association
ALEIAC	-	Australian Livestock Export Industry Advisory Committee
ALTV	-	Association of Livestock Transport Veterinarians
AMIEU	-	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
AMLC	-	Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation
AMLRDC	-	Australian Meat and Livestock Research and Development Corporation
AMRC	-	Australian Meat Research Committee
ANU	-	Australian National University
APHQS	-	Australian Plant Health and Quarantine Service (Now AAHQS)
AVA	-	Australian Veterinary Association
BAE	-	Bureau of Agricultural Economics
CF	-	Cost and Freight
CIF	-	Cost, Insurance, Freight

CSIRO	-	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization
DOT	-	Department of Transport
DPI	-	Department of Primary Industry
DST	-	Department of Shipping and Transport (Now DOT)
EIS	-	Export Inspection Service
FAO	-	Food and Agricultural Organization (United Nations)
FAS	-	<i>alongside</i> Free <del>at</del> Ship
FIRB	-	Foreign Investment Review Board
FOB	-	Free on Board
IAC	-	Industries Assistance Commission
KLTT	-	Kuwait Livestock Transport and Trading Company
LAC	-	Livestock Advisory Committee
LGPA	-	Livestock and Grain Producers Association of New South Wales
NFF	-	National Farmers Federation
RETWA	-	Rural Export and Trading (Western Australia)
RSPCA	-	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
SLTT	-	Saudi Livestock Transport and Trading Company
UAE	-	United Arab Emirates
UNE	-	University of New England
UNSW	-	University of New South Wales

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### General Conclusions

The live sheep trade transfers the place of slaughter of six or seven million sheep a year from Australia to the Middle East, which necessitates the transportation of those sheep at least 10 000 kilometres. The Australian Veterinary Association and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals argued, on animal welfare grounds, that livestock should be slaughtered as close as possible to the point of production. There is little doubt that sheep suffer during the journey from an Australian farm to an abattoir in the Middle East. Any form of transport puts stress on livestock. Even if sheep were to adapt to the confined conditions on sheep carriers, they would still undergo stress, or other forms of suffering, during the process of adaptation to those conditions, or under particular adverse conditions encountered on the journey. In addition, the conditions under which sheep are slaughtered in the Middle East do not match the conditions in Australian abattoirs, which have regulations to ensure a higher standard of animal welfare.

The Committee came to the conclusion that, if a decision were to be made on the future of the trade purely on animal welfare grounds, there is enough evidence to stop the trade. The trade is, in many respects, inimical to good animal welfare, and it is not in the interests of the animal to be transported to the Middle East for slaughter.

The Committee agreed that the animal welfare aspects of the trade cannot be divorced from economic and other considerations. Consequently, the Committee considered a range of economic and other factors, some of which were: returns to producers, investment in the trade, international trade considerations, changes in the structure of the Australian flock and the cost to the meat processing industry. After consideration of all factors, the Committee acknowledges the reality of the situation that any short-term cessation or disruption to the trade would cause considerable dislocation both in Australia and in the Middle East. Consequently, the Committee agrees that the trade will continue for some years and insists that significant improvements be made to animal welfare in many areas of the trade as recommended in this report.

The implementation of reforms will help to reduce but not eliminate stress, suffering and risk during transportation of sheep to the Middle East. Therefore a long-term solution must be sought. The substitution of the refrigerated sheepmeat trade for the live export trade offers such a solution. The Federal Government should promote and encourage the expansion of the

refrigerated sheepmeat trade to the Middle East and other countries, with the aim of eventually substituting it for the live sheep trade.

### Recommendations

4.8 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service ensure that research agreed to by the Australian Livestock Export Industry Advisory Committee in February 1984, for which funding has been approved by Australian Meat Research Committee, on regional sources of sheep and subsequent adaptation to conditions on live sheep carriers, be commenced without delay.

4.15 The Committee RECOMMENDS that live sheep under two years of age not be exported until the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service has completed an investigation as to the minimum age that should apply to export sheep.

5.14 The Committee RECOMMENDS that details of sheep mortalities sustained during transportation from farm to feedlot be forwarded to the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service for collation and analysis.

6.12 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service revise the standards to provide for a period of feedlotting of sheep of not less than seven days prior to export and that it be made clear that this period excludes the days of arrival and departure.

6.15 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service issues instructions to quarantine veterinary officers to prevent sheep, which have not spent the specified time in a feedlot, from being loaded on to a sheep carrier.

6.22 The Committee RECOMMENDS that troughs in feedlots be raised to approximately the height of troughs onboard carriers.

6.29 The Committee RECOMMENDS that feed troughs be covered in export feedlots at Portland and in other places where there are problems or potential problems with weather conditions affecting the adaptation of sheep to a pellet diet.

6.34 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the State Departments of Agriculture assess the capacity of each feedlot and ensure that the capacity is not exceeded at any time.

6.44 The Committee RECOMMENDS that adequate shelter be provided to sheep in the feedlots.

6.51 The Committee RECOMMENDS that details of sheep mortalities sustained during the period of feedlotting prior to export be forwarded to the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service for collation and analysis.

6.56 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service, in consultation with the State Departments of Agriculture and the Australian Livestock Exporters Association, draw up national standards for export feedlots.

6.57 The Committee further RECOMMENDS that the State Governments license export feedlots based on the proposed national standards and, should a feedlot fail to observe these standards, the licence for that feedlot be revoked, suspended or not renewed, as appropriate.

7.9 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Department of Transport, in consultation with the Australian Livestock Exporters Association and Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service, commission research into the use of binders and other methods to reduce the incidence of pellet crumbling and dusty feed in feedlots and aboard ships and to establish a minimum standard of pellet cohesion to be incorporated in the Marine Orders and Code of Practice.

7.24 The Committee RECOMMENDS that Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service arrange for research to be done to draw up minimum standards for pellets to maintain body weight and to ensure the nutritional welfare of the sheep in the feedlot and aboard the carrier.

7.25 The Committee also RECOMMENDS that a uniform pellet testing procedure be carried out either by a government authority or an independent body for each shipment of sheep and that the results of these tests be forwarded to the feedmill, the shipper, the relevant State Department of Agriculture and the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service.

8.13 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service draw the attention of quarantine veterinary officers to the need to halt loading under unsuitable weather conditions.

8.21 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service, in consultation with State Departments of Agriculture, arrange training programmes for waterside workers who load animals on to carriers.

8.33 The Committee RECOMMENDS that quarantine veterinary officers inspect carriers before departure to ensure that stocking densities are complied with.

8.37 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Livestock Advisory Committee review stocking densities onboard live sheep carriers and, if necessary, the Department of Transport amend the Marine Orders, Part 43, accordingly.

9.21 The Committee strongly supports the recent development of government veterinary officers travelling on about 20 per cent of voyages of live sheep carriers to the Middle East. The Committee RECOMMENDS that the implementation of this scheme be given high priority by the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service.

9.22 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Federal Government encourage live sheep export shipping companies to employ Australian stockmen on live sheep carriers.

9.34 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Department of Transport, in consultation with the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service, investigate the problem of trough fouling aboard live sheep carriers and revise the Marine Orders accordingly.

9.40 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Department of Transport, in Consultation with the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service, assess the welfare benefits of automatic feeding and watering equipment and, if necessary, amend the Marine Orders to require their installation in live sheep carriers.

9.44 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Department of Transport, in consultation with the Livestock Advisory Commission and the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service, consider the question of optimum volume of reserve feed and water and, if necessary, revise the Marine Orders accordingly.

9.47 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Department of Transport assess the merits of different feed handling systems in their ability to reduce crumbling of the pellet.

9.48 The Committee further RECOMMENDS that, on the basis of the Department of Transport assessment, satisfactory feed handling systems be required to be installed in all future carriers entering the trade, and that the Marine Orders Part 43 be revised accordingly.

9.66 The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Department of Transport, in consultation with the Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service, undertake, as a matter of priority, an investigation of the effectiveness of ventilation standards required for sheep carriers, and revise Marine Orders Part 43 accordingly.

9.77 The Committee RECOMMENDS that all live sheep carriers be required to meet the revised standards recommended in this report or be withdrawn from the trade.

16.33 The Committee RECOMMENDS that federal legislation be enacted to give Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service responsibility for the health and welfare of sheep from arrival at an export feedlot to loading onboard a carrier. Under this legislation and where necessary in consultation with the industry, Australian Agricultural Health and Quarantine Service be required to, apart from the continuation of its present functions:

- (i) receive, collate and analyse statistics and other information in relation to transport of sheep to the feedlot, sheep in the feedlot, transport of sheep to the carrier and transport of sheep to the Middle East;
- (ii) ensure the maintenance of proper standards of health and welfare of sheep, as set out in legislation, regulations or codes of practice, from arrival at an export feedlot to loading onboard a carrier; and
- (iii) to conduct research or arrange for research to be done into aspects of the live sheep export trade.