

Submission Against Live Sheep Export Ban

As a member of a generational sheep farmer, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed ban on live sheep exports by sea after May 1, 2028.

This policy would be economically devastating for my family's business, the entire Australian sheep industry and the viability of many regional towns.

Importance of Live Exports for Farmers

Live sheep exports are a vital income stream that underpins the viability of sheep farming enterprises across Australia. For my own business:

- Live exports account for over 40% of annual revenue from sheep sales
- This income allows me to reinvest in maintaining breeding stock, pasture improvements, and sustainable land management practices
- Without this trade, I would be forced to destock by over half, jeopardizing the future of my farm

The proposed transition period until 2028 is unrealistically short. It takes many years of genetic selection to reorient breeding programs towards meat-focused production. A blanket ban would leave me with livestock that cannot be sold profitably.

Role in Sustainable Crop Rotation

Sheep production plays an integral role in sustainable crop rotation systems:

- Sheep are grazed on crop stubbles and fallow land to cycle nutrients back into soils
- This natural fertilization reduces reliance on synthetic fertilizers
- The wool, meat and live export income supports the entire mixed farming operation

Removing live exports would disrupt this sustainable model, with negative environmental impacts and loss of economic diversity.

Animal Welfare is a Priority

As a farmer, I have an ethical obligation to ensure the welfare of my animals at all stages of their lives. The live export industry has continually improved practices:

- Strict regulations under ESCAS governing conditions on ships, in feedlots and processing facilities
- Auditing and oversight by Australian personnel to enforce standards
- Adoption of heat stress risk management plans, ventilation systems and other reforms

Shipping is often the most humane and lowest-stress method of transporting livestock over long distances to markets that cannot be readily accessed by air.

Economic Impacts on Rural Communities

My local community's economy is heavily dependent on live exports and associated supply chains:

- Farm input suppliers, livestock transporters and shipping agents would lose major income
- Reduced spending power would impact local businesses, schools, hospitals and services
- Population declines would be inevitable as families are forced to leave the region

The economic impacts would extend up and down the live export supply chain:

- Feed mills, livestock transporters and exporters would downsize or close
- Shipping companies would reroute vessels, costing Australian maritime jobs
- Processing facilities in importing nations would shut down

This would significantly reduce Australia's export earnings and negatively impact the national economy.

The proposed adjustment assistance is welcome but cannot realistically offset such severe economic impacts.

Recommendations

Rather than pursuing a destructive trade ban, I urge the government to consider reforms that balance animal welfare with preserving sustainable agricultural exports:

1. Continuing to strengthen welfare standards and enforcement through ESCAS
2. Increasing investment in training, export infrastructure and logistics
3. Assisting industry diversification into new markets and value-added products

The live sheep export trade can be preserved and enhanced through collaborative reforms that avoid crippling entire regional communities. I implore the government to work cooperatively with industry on viable policy solutions.