



HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

AUSTRALIA

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To Whom It May Concern

Submission by Humane Society International (Australia) to support the *Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024*

HSI is the world's largest animal protection organisation and HSI Australia established our office in 1994. We work to create a humane and sustainable world for animals advocating across wildlife conservation and animal welfare policy areas. Our vision is for a world where people treat animals and nature with respect and compassion.

Humane Society International Australia (HSI) is also a proud member of the Australian Alliance for Animals, which was formed to pursue critical reforms to animal welfare regulatory frameworks. HSI expresses our full support for the submission by the Australian Alliance for Animals, and we offer the following comments in addition.

SUMMARY

HSI has long opposed the live sheep export trade and strongly supports the proposed legislation to phase out live sheep exports by sea. This submission supports the policy to phase out live sheep exports by sea and commends the government for introducing the *Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024*.

Legislation:

- HSI strongly supports the passage of the *Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024* in this term of parliament to provide certainty to farmers, the live export industry, the Australian public, and the animal welfare sector. HSI commends the Albanese government for fulfilling their 2022 election commitment.



Lack of reform:

- The live export of animals goes against basic principles of animal welfare and always presents an unacceptable risk of animal cruelty. It is not possible to export large numbers of live sheep by sea humanely, and despite the implementation of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) since 2012 to reform the trade, there have been continued reports of non-compliance and suffering.
- The analysis of Independent Observer reports from 2018 to 2023 showed that over 60 per cent documented heat stress in sheep, and the most common reported causes of death were starvation and gastrointestinal disease.

Animal welfare:

- Once the sheep arrive at their destination in the Middle East, Australian sheep can be slaughtered while fully conscious which HSI strongly opposes.
- If they were instead processed in Australia, the Halal-accredited slaughter here requires stunning.
- Environments with high humidity and heat are particularly challenging for sheep given their physiology, so they are more susceptible to suffering when subjected to these conditions.
- Despite the northern summer trade prohibition, sheep continue to suffer heat stress during the months that surround the prohibited period. This suffering is impossible to avoid despite improvements with regards to stocking densities and ventilation.
- A fundamental principle of farm animal welfare is to slaughter an animal as close as possible to the point of production in order to minimise stress and discomfort. Long distance journeys contradict this most basic of principles from the outset.
- The best strategy is to make every effort to process animals as close to the farm as possible with minimal transport duration times.

Public opinion:

- The animal welfare implications of the live sheep export trade have been under public scrutiny for decades, with elements such as heat stress during voyages, inhumane slaughter methods at destination countries, high stocking densities and the long arduous journeys losing the industry its social licence.
- New Zealand successfully banned the live export of cows, sheep, deer and goats by sea in 2023. The UK Parliament recently banned the live export of farmed animals for fattening and slaughter. In 2023, a Brazilian court banned live exports of cattle.
- The numerous media exposés and animal welfare disasters over the years have led to declining public support for the live sheep trade from Australia. There is also growing public concern for animal welfare in Australia¹.

¹ Futureye “Commodity or Sentient Being? Australia's Shifting Mindset on Farm Animal Welfare”, DAWR, Canberra, 2018


- Polling commissioned by the RSPCA ([McCrinkle 2022](#)) showed that 78 per cent of Australians would support a phase out if farmers were supported through the transition, and in May 2023 a survey showed over 70 per cent of West Australians support a phase out ([McCrinkle 2023](#)).
- A [Parliamentary petition](#) in 2023 calling for a legislated end date to live sheep export secured 43,758 signatures, one of the largest Australian parliamentary e-petitions in history.

A more sustainable, humane future:

- The live sheep export trade has already declined by more than two-thirds since 2017/18, from around 2 million sheep exported, down to approximately 500,000 sheep exported during 2022.
- Live sheep exports make up less than 0.1 per cent of Australia's agricultural exports, nationally.
- The value of Australia's chilled and frozen lamb and mutton exports to the Middle East is already valued at more than eight times that of value of the live sheep trade (\$632 million versus \$77 million, ABS 2022-23).
- This puts into context the size of the live sheep export trade when compared to the sheep meat export trade. Phasing out the live sheep export trade presents an opportunity for farmers within the sheep industry. The Panel noted that, "the WA sheep industry can be profitable and sustainable during the transition period and beyond the end of live sheep exports by sea."
- HSI supports the provision of Government investment to assist farmers and impacted stakeholders to transition away from the live export trade. Investment towards additional processing facilities and associated labour costs is essential to help offer alternative markets for sheep that would have otherwise been directed to the live trade.
- Phasing out live sheep exports will allow for a more humane and sustainable future for the Australian sheep industry, and help to preserve Australia's global reputation when it comes to animal welfare.

HSI appreciates this opportunity and hopes the recommendations outlined above and within the Australian Alliance for Animals submission help to encourage the committee members to support the legislation. We look forward to seeing the *Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024* pass in Parliament without delay.

Yours sincerely


Animal Welfare Campaigner
Humane Society International Australia