

We do not support the policy of a phase out of live sheep export from Australia by sea.

We believe the decision to phase out the live exporting of sheep is purely a political issue, aimed at appealing to voters based on emotion rather than facts.

It is our view that this decision sets an alarming precedent. We believe the animal activists will move on to a campaign against live cattle export and ultimately the farming of any animals, regardless of best practice by the farming industry.

In recent years, there have been continual improvements to the animal welfare of animals with the creation of the ESCAS and seasonal shipping arrangements. Countries in the Middle East require live animals to meet their needs and Australia has the capacity to supply high quality animals in a supply chain assured scheme. It is a win-win trade arrangement which benefits our economy and creates

It is not possible to 'transition' away from the trade. It is our view, the 'flow-on' effect is that many producers will transition out of sheep entirely which will come at a significant loss to the \$1.4 billion sheep industry in WA.

Animal Welfare:

On our farm, we value best practice animal husbandry in both cattle and sheep. We employ low stress stock handling with emphasis on very good handling facilities for the animals such as good quality sheep yards and shearing sheds. We believe in mulesing as best practice for controlling fly strike, and use approved pain relief treatments to assist the animal's recovery. Sheep dogs are trained to handle sheep with care and muzzled if necessary, in the yards. We insist our animals leave the farm in high quality truck transport.

We support all measures taken in the ESCAS system to ensure animals are transported, managed and slaughtered in the most humane methods.

Implications for our business:

The live sheep export is an important part of our business and has been for at least 50 years. We run 3,500 merino ewes, of which two thirds are mated to merino rams. All the wether lambs (between 1000 and 1200) are sold to live export. We have built our merino flock on the basis of selling our wether lambs, which are often not finished enough, carcase wise, to be sold to the abattoir, but are perfectly suitable for live export.

Due to reduced competition and markets, we estimate the cessation of live export will have a direct negative cost. We anticipate a loss of between \$50,000 and \$75,000 to this part of our sheep enterprise, due to reduced prices, per head. We saw a similar market reduction when the Saudi market was taken away from us in 2012 and we anticipate the same again. On our mixed farming operation, this income cannot be replaced simply by switching to alternative production systems. In our relatively low rainfall location, we cannot run the risk of not having a market to sell our wethers. The reality is, we will reduce our sheep numbers and consequently our productivity. For us, this is likely to lead to a decision to exit the sheep industry completely.

Implications for the Sheep Industry:

Abattoirs in WA are already largely filled with international labour because staff cannot be sourced locally. As well, at a time where currently one million WA sheep exit the country via live export, abattoirs in WA are already struggling to process our existing flock. We will have no option but to reduce our numbers.

A reduction in sheep numbers will have a negative effect on the whole livestock industry in terms of jobs and associated economies. It is highly likely, wool production in WA will reduce.

Australia is a country that should be advocating our clean and green livestock and wool products internationally.

Implications for our Regional Communities and Economies:

We live in an area [REDACTED] where sheep production has already drastically declined since the wool stockpile in 1987/88. This has severely adversely affected our region by way of population loss and the resulting negative community impacts.

The number of stockmen and women, shearers, livestock agents, feed suppliers, livestock carriers and veterinarians has already significantly reduced in our community over the last 35 years. The numbers at our local schools have reduced by half. We are not unique - a survey of most northern and eastern wheatbelt regions of the state will see a decline in population, and consequently service provision.

The decision to stop live sheep export will negatively impact most regional communities [REDACTED], who perhaps up until now, due to softer climate conditions and consequently higher sheep numbers, have not felt the effects of such drastic population decline.

Whilst on the face of it, this decision might seem like only a small piece of the animal industry, and might not make much of a difference, collectively government decisions like this chip away at regional WA. While regional communities in Eastern Australia have seen recent population increases, in WA we are facing serious rural decline. This decision, made largely in Eastern states city communities, will further damage our regional economies and sparsely populated state.