

SUBMISSION

14 June 2023

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Live Sheep Exports Phase Out team

Via email: livesheep.phaseout@agriculture.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Phase out of live sheep exports by sea

Cattle Australia (CA) is the national peak body representing the interests of grassfed beef cattle producers, providing a unified voice, industry leadership and policy direction. CA ensures grassfed levies support grassfed producers and a more productive and profitable industry. Our industry has much to be proud of with the national herd approaching 28 million head and 52,000 businesses, supporting 428,000 jobs, including processors, exporters and truck drivers. Cattle producers are the stewards of over 50% of the Australian landmass protecting and enhancing economic, social, cultural and environmental values for future generations.

CA welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the phase out of live sheep exports by sea: consultation paper. CA recognise that the consultation paper has been developed as part of a consultation process to assist the Australian Government to implement its election commitment to phase out live sheep exports by sea.

CA is firmly opposed to the government's policy regarding the phase out of live sheep exports by sea. The policy sets a concerning precedent for all of agriculture, undermining investor confidence and our international trade relationships. The Australian livestock export industry is world leading and is responsible for lifting animal welfare standards in our international live export markets. The livestock export industry is committed to promoting a culture of continuous improvement that has raised standards globally and resulted in world class animal welfare outcomes.

A prosperous livestock export industry is critical to Australian cattle producers and particularly producers in northern Australia (Northern Territory, Western Australia, and Queensland) where the beef production systems are predominantly focused on the live export trade. Live export remains integral to several free trade agreements and provides market diversification options and a degree of competition for producers in QLD, WA and NT where processing options are also limited. CA recognise Australia's livestock export trade is an economically significant alternative market, complementing domestic processing, creating essential market diversity and competition for Australian cattle producers.

The CA response to the enquiry will focus on how the phase out will specifically impact grassfed cattle producers and other related businesses across the cattle supply chain. Below is our response to those questions:

3) Will you or your business be impacted by the phase out of live sheep exports by sea? If so, please provide details of the impact.

CA recognise Australia's livestock export trade is an economically significant market, complementing domestic processing, creating essential market diversity and competition for Australian cattle producers. The grassfed cattle sector in WA is dependent on live export to provide competitive sale options for cattle producers to processing. This additional competition assists in maintaining consistent prices for cattle producers, and in times of drought when feed supply is limited, by providing competitive options for reducing stock numbers when needed.

While the government has committed to maintaining support for the cattle live export industry, in WA this will be difficult particularly in Southern WA where the viability of some voyages is intrinsically linked to sheep exports, with the majority of live sheep export voyages from WA also carrying cattle. Light weight bulls that don't have an alternative market make up a significant number of the cattle that are transported on these dual species consignments. Dual species vessels with cattle and sheep consignments have been steadily increasing over the last ten years, and are particularly important to Middle Eastern markets. The latest Mercado report states that over the last five years Australia on average has exported over 45 000 live cattle per year to Israel alone¹. Table 1² outlines the number of voyage types over this time frame, and Table 2 outlines the number of livestock involved in these voyages out of WA.

Table 3³ outlines all cattle exported by sea from WA from 2018-2022 with origin and destination ports, and markets. A ban on sheep exports will have an immediate impact on WA ports, transport operators and feedstock carriers that service these voyages and will have an inevitable flow on effect to the cost of services and undermine the scale required for an economically viable live cattle export industry in Western Australia.

CA are of the view that decisions of governments should be scientifically evidence based. If the live export of sheep is phased out without any performance evidence to support the decision, the live cattle trade remains susceptible with ongoing campaigns and the activities of animal activists seeking the elimination of the live export trade entirely. Ultimately the live cattle trade will be targeted, along with any part of the supply chain that handles live animals. Further, under this approach, any industry could be shut down due to emotion or ideology. The precedent is dangerous and presents sovereign risk for livestock and other agricultural sectors.

There is currently no scientific evidence to support the notion that the live export of sheep should be phased out and sets a concerning precedent to our international markets. Australian Government regulations introduced in 2018 have been successful in maintaining a high standard of animal welfare on live export ships. The live sheep export industry has successfully operated for five years without a significant incident.

4) What will the phase out mean to you, your employer or employees, suppliers, customers, friends and family, and/or your community?

A ban on live sheep exports by sea will have a broader impact on rural communities, once the companies involved in the live export trade, are no longer present in those areas. This would include the loss of jobs, the

¹ Mercado, *Australian live sheep export trade analysis*. May 2023

² Reports to Parliament - Livestock mortalities for exports by sea: <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/export/controlled-goods/live-animals/live-animal-export-statistics/reports-to-parliament>

³ <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/export/controlled-goods/live-animals/live-animal-export-statistics/livestock-exports-by-market>

loss of broader businesses and the services they provide. Many services in these communities are also funded by livestock producers including fire management and control, local sporting clubs and community events.

The presence of the live sheep export industry supports the viability of other rural industries, and once it is gone, certain rural businesses will no longer be commercially viable. This includes transporters, holding yards, feedlots and the southern WA live cattle industry.

9) What can be learnt from other countries that have ceased live sheep exports? What lessons can be learned from Australian states or territories that no longer export live sheep by sea?

New Zealand have recently banned the live export of cattle (predominantly dairy breeders to China). This ban has a number of ramifications, including financial and social impacts. This has resulted in increased demand for Australian dairy breeding cattle. Demand for live exports will not be reduced in international markets by banning live sheep exports. International buyers will merely source livestock from elsewhere.

Australia is a world leader in animal welfare in the live export industry, and our systems help to improve animal welfare outcomes overseas. Australia's Export Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) ensures Australian export livestock are managed to the point of slaughter within accredited supply chains under world leading animal welfare standards. Critically, if Australia is removed from the international live export markets, we can expect increased numbers of animals to be sourced from countries that don't have any of the equivalent Australian animal welfare standards and thereby expect animal welfare standards for supply into these markets to be almost non-existent. The loss of live sheep exports by sea from Australia will force current Australian destination markets to source alternative suppliers of both sheep and cattle.

Any phase out therefore is not in the overall interests of animal welfare.

If there are any queries about this submission, please do not hesitate to contact our office on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

David Foote
Chair
Cattle Australia

Appendix

Table 1: Number of Voyages by type

Departure Year	Cattle + Sheep Voyage	Cattle Only Voyage	Sheep Only Voyage	Total Voyages	% voyages Multi species
2012	22	4	10	36	61%
2013	17	11	12	40	43%
2014	20	3	11	34	59%
2015	18	4	12	34	53%
2016	21	6	9	36	58%
2017	23	3	14	40	58%
2018	18	3	2	23	78%
2019	20	7		27	74%
2020	11	5	4	20	55%
2021	11	1	1	13	85%
Total	181	47	75	303	60%

Table 2: Livestock Numbers by Voyage Type

Departure Year	Livestock Loaded	Cattle + Sheep Voyage	Cattle Only Voyage	Sheep Only Voyage	Total Livestock	% Livestock on Multi Species Voyage
2012	No Cattle Loaded	111,120	28,912		140,032	79%
2012	No of Sheep Loaded	1,240,539		795,585	2,036,124	61%
2013	No Cattle Loaded	75,303	56,643	-	131,946	57%
2013	No of Sheep Loaded	1,054,791	-	883,717	1,938,508	54%
2014	No Cattle Loaded	95,811	12,077		107,888	89%
2014	No of Sheep Loaded	1,334,650		792,076	2,126,726	63%
2015	No Cattle Loaded	73,123	14,892		88,015	83%
2015	No of Sheep Loaded	1,081,211		908,896	1,990,107	54%
2016	No Cattle Loaded	87,880	54,648		142,528	62%
2016	No of Sheep Loaded	1,061,198		623,634	1,684,832	63%
2017	No Cattle Loaded	55,142	10,063		65,205	85%
2017	No of Sheep Loaded	1,269,232		576,040	1,845,272	69%
2018	No Cattle Loaded	45,256	16,210		61,466	74%
2018	No of Sheep Loaded					97%

Phase out of live sheep exports by sea

		871,037		30,114	901,151	
2019	No Cattle Loaded	60,096	33,339		93,435	64%
2019	No of Sheep Loaded	1,060,274			1,060,274	100%
2020	No Cattle Loaded	32,092	21,540	-	53,632	60%
2020	No of Sheep Loaded	545,211	-	224,671	769,882	71%
2021	No Cattle Loaded	21,179	6,154		27,333	77%
2021	No of Sheep Loaded	488,969		58,815	547,784	89%
TOTAL	No Cattle Loaded	657,002	254,478	-	911,480	72%
TOTAL	No of Sheep Loaded	10,007,112	-	4,893,548	14,900,660	67%

Table 3: All cattle exported by Sea from Western Australia (2018-2022)																	
Load Port /	Brunei														United Arab		Total
Destination Country	Darussalam	China	Indonesia	Israel	Jordan	Kuwait	Malaysia	Pakistan	Philippines	Qatar	Russia	Sarawak	Thailand	Turkey	Emirates	Vietnam	
Broome	1,338		326,165				33,573			11,351			5,568			106,056	484,051
Fremantle	3,282	62,398	72,880	217,472	5,489	5,157	12,468	910		7,129	16,418	400		16,349	3,371	142,352	566,075
Geraldton		1,742	23,625				1,145			1,639						1,845	29,996
Port Hedland			11,742														11,742
Wyndham			102,826													1,705	104,531
Total	4,620	64,140	537,238	217,472	5,489	5,157	47,186	910		12,990	7,129	16,418	400	5,568	16,349	3,371	1,196,395