

Phase Out of Live Sheep by Sea Submission

31st May 2022

The agricultural sector in Western Australia is an important industry and impacts a wide range of sectors. Impacts of the proposed ban on live shipping of sheep will have a detrimental impact to all of these sectors.

The how and when is impossible to determine as the varied supply chain and investment into new markets may take years to finalise. Further considerations should be taken prior to ensuring a lifetime ban.

Direct Personal impact

- Our involvement with the Live Sheep industry has been in varied capacities and stretched for over 30 years (my husband).
 - Directly employment with one of the largest Australian sheep exporters
 - Working with ruminant feed manufacturers to provide nutritional support to the agricultural and export sectors
 - Supporting ruminant producers in a veterinary, nutrition and production capacity through our small business.
 - Continued involvement with the export trade as an AAV (husband)
 - Consultant to a number of local WA owned and operated businesses that support the ruminant agricultural sector
- The majority of our household income is derived from our business that supports the ruminant agricultural sectors and a large proportion is a direct result from live export trades. It has supported our family and educated our three children. Should this ban take place we will be required to pivot to find additional sources of income.

The Primary Producer

- Impacts on the primary producer no doubt are already taking place, with enterprise decisions for the future already in the planning. The actual impact will be seen over time and may be disastrous and irreversible. These changes should be monitored NOW to determine the full effects of this proposed act.

Adaptability – farmers daily life.

- As we all know farming is not an easy profession and no two days are the same, nor is the profitability a certainty. Farmers have been adapting for generations to ensure the survival of their enterprises. From new genetics, products, research, technology, equipment, standards, ethics, increasing interest rates, enduring changes in weather and climate change, all whilst educating themselves, their successors and staff to ensure a profitable enterprise to ultimately secure a future for generations to come.
- Farmers and exporters have continued to adapt to new regulations for export over the past 5 years since the Department reviews in 2018. New standards are continually being implemented and met by the industry.
- How much adaptability should an enterprise have to endure if this market is taken away? Some sheep producers in SW WA will adapt their sheep enterprises, given the infrastructure, supply chain and markets remain in tact. There is a general feeling a large number of sheep producers will simply walk away from this industry and convert, once livestock or mixed

farming to sole cropping enterprises. Hopefully they can be persuaded not to leave the industry completely and sell land to offshore investors. A complete change in agricultural enterprise will not only impact farming succession, but impact entire communities and the ecology and biodiversity of the region.

Foreign investment vs local ownership

- Currently producers in the south west of WA make up a large proportion of landowners, with family succession plans to ensure future generations of farming will continue.
- A concern may be with the proposed export ban a large number of sheep producers will exit the industry. Some may adapt or change the focus of their enterprises. A number may decide that this is the time to sell up and move on to greener pastures. This then poses the question who will buy and become custodians of these land masses. Will property ownership move from Australian to overseas investors? Will the property management and custodianship remain or will it cease to exist?

Industry

- The total supply chain for this industry should not be forgotten. If animal production declines as a direct result of the proposed ban there will be a flow through effect to all industry associated, this also extends through to Australian Government departments. Loss of income for feed suppliers and manufacturers, machinery producers, animal product manufacturers and resellers, animal health consultants, truck drivers, farm hands, general staff and many more. Potentially also nett reduction of Australian exports.
- For a change in markets, local infrastructure will need to be greatly increased before a ban be put in place. New or improved local facilities to process carcasses will need to be established. It is evident at this time, that there is not enough space at processors to process all carcasses. Producers are being left to either wait, with anticipated penalties due to not meeting criteria (overweight), hold over stock to next season or to transport to other parts of Australia for processing. All, an additional cost to the producer, reducing profits.

Community

- Impacts to local communities will be hard to determine, however it could be assumed that if farming enterprises chose to adapt to different areas of agriculture the supporting communities will also change. Such change from intensive animal to cropping based enterprises will mean changes to the number of required personnel to service the new environment.
- Mental health impacts will be seen due to uncertainty and increased financial strain.
- Potential to see the closure of entire towns. With reduced requirements due to reduced populations and employees, services such as schools, hospitals, ambulance services, vets, doctors/nurses, rural suppliers, banks, supermarkets, fuel stations, entire communities will be impacted. This will also directly impact any potential tourism to these areas.

Biodiversity and environmental

- There has been a focus on the impact to people, however there is a need to look at the environmental impacts to these regions if massive change occurs.
- With the current mixed farming practices there are land management plans and an elements of soil management and care. Should these areas become cropping enterprises it will have a



dramatic impact on the environment, where soils will be depleted of nutrients, increase in chemicals and artificial fertilisers and the native flora and fauna will also decline or become

extinct due to clearing or increased in applications and high intensity pastures. Independent environmental studies should be undertaken to determine the full impact of these potential changes to the risk areas. It is seen that when land is cleared for housing all the natural flora and fauna are “bulldozed” to make room for growing populations. Let’s preserve the beautiful southern areas.

Carbon cycle

- With reduced biodiversity in these large areas what is the impact of the carbon cycle?
- Where will we get a variety of natural fertilisers without a livestock industry? Sheep manure for the roses?
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Exports

- One can argue that the numbers of sheep exported have decreased in that past few years, however it seems there is a trend of decreasing export numbers of all livestock as reported by the Dept of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/export/controlled-goods/live-animals/live-animal-export-statistics/livestock-exports-by-market>.
- Reasons behind these declining numbers has not been explained, however COVID-19 could be seen to have an impact due to the timing of the decline in that above reported numbers. Ongoing global restrictions, political implications, increasing scrutiny of livestock exports increasing costs to the end consumers may be some explanations behind the decline.
- According to a MLA 2020 report, Australia’s top three export destinations in 2019 were China, the US and the UAE which may support the theory of declining numbers may be directly linked to COVID-19 and Australian export partners. Australia is also known to be the largest exporter of sheepmeat in the world, accounting for around 7% of global sheepmeat production. <https://www.mla.com.au/globalassets/mla-corporate/prices--markets/documents/trends--analysis/fast-facts--maps/2020/mla-sheep-fast-facts-2020.pdf>
- If the live export is reduced from the market, how can Australia ensure that these current markets will remain? New markets will need to be sourced and possibly at the risk of taking it from another country which may have political implications.
- It is well documented that the international community love Australian lamb.

Australian Welfare standards vs international standards

- It is heavily reported that Australian standards for Live shipping are one of the highest in the world. Without the benchmark of Australian shipping where will the international industry head? If we opt out, how can we be a leader in the area and have a stay in international standards?
- Australian’s should work together to ensure our international community is maintaining the highest possible standards in order to invest in the future of the planet. How can we have a say when we opted out?
- How can Australian’s ensure that animal transport is kept to the highest standards world wide? We need to take care of our international animal welfare not just in our backyard.

Export Standards



- Standards for live shipping have seen remarkable improvements over the past 30 years, and more so in the current term of government
 - What are the benchmark levels for the turnaround of this industry?
 - What are satisfactory levels?
 - Who are the deciding bodies that make informed and educated decisions?
- ESCAS was implemented on 2011 and has continued to be reviewed with increasing scrutiny.
- The increasing costs incurred through new standards and regulations covered by exporters and overseas markets and has not reflected in prices paid to the primary producer

Compensation

- In a number of the panel discussions, mention of compensation was brought forward.
- Who will be in receipt of a compensation payout and how far will it extend?
- It should be important to advertise this to the Australian population where this compensation will come from, namely a tax that will impact the back pockets of all Australians.

Submissions

- As will most submissions there will be a minority that take the time to put pen to paper. As a result, I hope that the panel is making all efforts to reach out to all potentially impacted areas and others that may not be impacted.
- Submissions should have been sought from larger catchment audiences. Why was it not advertised to a greater number of Australians that may not realise the impact of this potential ban may have on the future of Australian agriculture.
- The larger population, the average Australian may not be aware of the importance of Agriculture and the supply chain it supports. The general population takes it for granted that there will be food on the supermarket shelves when they desire it at a affordable price.
- The current government should have put together, not just a phase out panel but an information package for the entire Australian community to access, prior to submission conclusion on this important sector and to illustrate a true account of the potential outcome.

Export of livestock

- It is a concern to the future of agriculture if there will be a flow on effect in other areas if the ban on live sheep shipping is approved. Will we have farmers producing animal protein in the future? Will this be the end of Agriculture in Australia as we know it?
- Animals Australia at presently is pushing hard for the closure of the pork industry on national free to air TV, and incorrectly advertising that we can all have a pet pig in our lounge room. Where next? Fish, chicken, honey or will eggs be next on their campaign?

Conclusion

Industry specialists will provide all the modelling to try to support this ban, however the full extent of this decision cannot be adequately modelled as there are factors that cannot be accounted for such as retaining international markets, enterprises closures and the future of agriculture.

People that will be impacted by this proposed change will some level of assurance, confidence and support through any potential change.



In conclusion this industry is a large part of the Australian international export markets especially important for WA where there is a greater potential for agricultural. What is the reasoning for governments objective – it was not the only election promise – why is this one so important?

Jane Baker