

Submission for the phase out of live sheep exports by sea

Robin Thompson

31 May 2023

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for hearing my submission regarding the phase out of live sheep exports by sea.

As an Australian citizen who cares deeply for animal rights and welfare, I am very grateful that the government is committed to ending the live sheep export trade by sea. This was a key government commitment made during the lead up to the 2022 federal election, and the Australian public want to see it implemented as soon as possible.

I would also like to see cattle included in the live export ban. It makes no sense to exclude them, given the grave suffering that is inflicted on both sheep and cattle at sea and in destination countries. I'll note New Zealand has recently banned live export for both sheep and cattle from April this year, after the death of 6,000 cattle from a sinking live export ship.¹

The public has seen the terrible footage of sheep suffering horrifically at sea, and want this to end as soon as possible. It is ethically corrupt and completely unconscionable to continue this practice, given the suffering experienced by these animals, including lying for weeks on end in their own untreated waste, choking on ammonia, becoming extremely heat-stressed and being cooked alive. Most lambs born on these horrific ships are trampled, lose their mothers, or are killed by distressed crew members.² As a developed, wealthy nation with high education levels, the Australian public are shocked that we are committing such atrocities onto other sentient animals with a high capacity for suffering.

In a broader sense, animals should not be treated as mere commodities for human exploitation and cruelty. I would love to see far more government support for plant based agriculture, incentives and financial support for farmers to move away from animal agriculture and towards plant agriculture, ending animal agriculture subsidies, and incentives for consumers to switch to healthier plant based products (e.g. taxation on animal meat products).

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/29/new-zealand-bans-live-animal-exports-from-april-2023>

² <https://animalsaustralia.org/our-work/live-export/live-export-ships-exposed/>

We also have an imperative to shift towards plant based dietary patterns for the sake of our environment, so incentivising farmers and consumers to make this switch is the right thing to do. Scientists are sounding the alarm at the need for dietary shifts in order to address climate change, such as in the BioScience article *World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency*:

Scientists have a moral obligation to clearly warn humanity of any catastrophic threat and to “tell it like it is.” On the basis of this obligation and the graphical indicators presented below, we declare, with more than 11,000 scientist signatories from around the world, clearly and unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergency.

Eating mostly plant-based foods while reducing the global consumption of animal products (figure 1c–d), especially ruminant livestock (Ripple et al. 2014), can improve human health and significantly lower GHG emissions (including methane in the “Short-lived pollutants” step). Moreover, this will free up croplands for growing much-needed human plant food instead of livestock feed, while releasing some grazing land to support natural climate solutions (see “Nature” section).³

In conclusion, I absolutely want to see live sheep export banned as soon as possible as per election commitments, but for this to include other animals live exported such as cattle. The shift away from animal agriculture and towards plant based agriculture is also a vitally important environment goal which governments can help to achieve. A general societal shift towards compassion for non-human animals and ending their exploitation and cruelty inflicted by humans is also sorely needed.

Profit should never take precedence over animal suffering.

Thank you,

Robin Thompson

³ <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/70/1/8/5610806>