

16<sup>th</sup> May 2023

**Re: PHASE OUT OF LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS BY SEA**

I have for some time now, pondered over the dark clouds looming over the merino industry, here in WA. In particular, the impact on my mixed farming business, if the live export were to be phased out.

The mental stress is already impacting on my decision going forward. The high cost of cropping inputs, along with the seasonal uncertainty, makes running sheep (merinos 100%), another income stream in the event of drought, frost etc, exposing me to less risk.

Only a few short years ago, financial institutions were reluctant to extend finance, unless there were sheep in the business. We have in bad seasons, been able to sell wethers and dry sheep to ensure our breeding sheep and their lambs, survive.

The export industry has been a vital avenue to do this, and the income received, has maintained our viability. The wool also shorn, has provided us with another income stream providing cashflow.

Live export demand keeps market buoyant.

Throughout the year, we would employ, up to sixteen people. They are all locals, living in, and supporting the local community and schools. They, and their families, also have a vested interest in the sheep industry.

They provide labour at lamb marking, crutching, shearing. They all rely on the seasonal work to keep them employed. Stock agents/agencies along with livestock carriers, feed millers and processors would also be impacted. I would even go so far to say, stud breeders will undoubtedly be affected, as there will no doubt, be those, that exit the industry.

Local abattoirs, and, processors, are operating beyond capacity, and the prices at saleyards, have decreased considerably. For many this season hasn't broken, and feed is scarce. Lambs will now have to be sold as hoggets, at a reduced price adding to the stress.

Then there's the anguish of this year's lambing. As a law of average, 50% of these will be males! What's the future for them?

Farming is an essential service. Countries need food security. The basis of any business venture is via feasibility study. Find out what the customer wants and produce it. At a higher standard than the opposition, with guaranteed supply. We already do that! We have met, and exceeded all requirements of ESCAS, ASEL and ACCL, and yet remain under scrutiny. This export provides millions of dollars. To jeopardise this industry is ludicrous. How much value is put on that?

Australia's export investment with the middle east, and African regions if \$3-4 billion, something we can showcase, through collaboration and innovation. We are still the forefront source of premium produce and food.

Relationships with these countries, relies on a strong emphasis of mutual respect and trust, throughout all avenues of trade. They, like us, prefer fresh meat, over frozen meat, that is, already days into its use by date, before it reaches their shores. In 2017, the live trade was worth \$249,000,000, 86% came from WA.

By 2019, due to restrictions, the value dropped 43%, to \$143,000,000, with 97% coming from WA.

Unless careful consideration is not given to reversing the decision on live export, the whole merino meat and wool industry, here, in WA is in real threat of ending.

**Tim George**

**Sheep Producer WA**