

April, 2018

Summary

For the first-time in the live export trade's history, vision has been made available from a series of routine sheep shipments to the Middle East. These shipments occurred between May and November 2017. Across these shipments over 4,000 sheep perished, with 2,400 dying from heat stroke on one voyage.

The evidence, documented across five shipments, shows extensive breaches of Australian regulations and International (World Organisation of Animal Health – OIE) standards as well as the WA Animal Welfare Act, resulting in systemic and often egregious animal suffering.

Australia's live sheep trade has operated for over five decades with only those financially invested in the trade having visual access to the conditions and welfare implications for the sheep on-board live export vessels. During this period, more than 200 million Australian sheep have been shipped to Middle East destinations such as Kuwait, Qatar and Oman with recorded deaths at sea exceeding 3 million animals.

This evidence reveals that Australian producers, politicians and the public have been actively deceived by the live export industry as to the standards of care on live sheep shipments.

Industry misleading and deceptive conduct

The *Australian Livestock Exporters' Council (ALEC)*, the peak body responsible for setting industry policy, has publicly stated that their social licence to operate is based on their '**no fear, no pain' animal welfare commitment**'. The vision comprehensively reveals that export companies are breaching this commitment; that day-to-day shipboard conditions cause stress and suffering and entire shipments of sheep are being subjected to heat stress and the well-documented risk of heat stroke in the Middle East summer months.

Where did the footage come from?

This footage was shot by a crew member (now whistle-blower). Upon realising he was witnessing widespread breaches of regulations, and systemic animal suffering that Australians, including farmers and decision makers were unaware of, he began filming on his phone. Under the terms of his employment, he was not able to depart the ship until this year. His evidence has been provided to state and federal authorities and he is now prepared to act as a witness in pending government investigations to attest to the routine breaches of Australian laws and regulations.

Which exporter is involved?

The Australian export company involved in all shipments pertaining to the evidence is Australia's oldest and largest sheep exporter - [Emanuel Export](#) (and its sister companies [EMS Rural Export](#) and [International Livestock Export](#)). This exporter has been involved in numerous controversies and large scale tragedies, including the 2003 Cormo Express disaster, and has a long history of breaching standards. Since 2005, Emanuel Exports' two directors have been associated with shipments exceeding 1,000 sheep deaths on 37 occasions, including 12 'reportable' incidents since 2006. Despite this, and compliance with standards being a condition of holding an export licence, Emanuel Exports has maintained their export licence.

What does the footage show?

Standard conditions on ships are breaching Federal and State laws, and International standards, including:

- the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL);
- the *Australian Meat & Livestock Industry (Standards) Order 2005* (Cth);
- the *Export Control (Animals) Order 2004* (Cth);
- *Animal Welfare Act 2002* (WA); and
- the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) guidelines

A required regulatory outcome of ASEL is that the health and welfare of animals must be maintained throughout the voyage. Evidence from five routine sheep shipments to the Middle East reveals that this regulatory obligation is not being met – yet export permits continue to be granted.

In addition, routine conditions on board clearly do not meet the Federal Government's '*Australian Position Statement on the Export of Livestock*' which states that **the trade should reflect 'community expectations', adhere to 'state and territory legislation**, including *Animal Welfare Acts*', and that Australian standards take into account '**OIE animal welfare guidelines** and in most instances exceed these.'

Regulatory breaches as per the visual evidence:

- Sheep suffering severe heat stress.
- Sheep dying from heat stroke – literally 'cooking alive' in the metal hull of the vessel.
- The sick, injured, dying and dead not being identified and treated and often not found until the end of the voyage.
- Severely decomposed bodies in pens with living sheep.
- Pens so overcrowded that access to food, water and rest is severely restricted.
- Pregnant ewes giving birth during shipments.
- Sheep caked in melted faeces and urine.

Regulatory responsibility

Federal

Under the *Export Control Orders 2002*, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture must refuse export permits unless regulations have been and will continue to be complied with, and the travel arrangements are adequate for the health and welfare of the animals.

On the basis of extensive evidence filmed across these five routine shipments, the Secretary should not be approving live sheep export permits to the Middle East and the exporter in question, Emanuel Exports, should have their export licence cancelled.

Western Australian Government

The WA Agriculture Minister Alannah MacTiernan has announced that an investigation will be conducted into breaches of the WA *Animal Welfare Act 2002*. Section 19 1.3 states **that 'animals should not be transported in a way likely to cause unnecessary harm.'** There is substantive evidence based on five decades of industry knowledge and research about heat stress animal welfare implications in the Middle Eastern summer, supported by recently provided visual evidence, that exporters are breaching this section.

Where did the sheep come from?

Western Australia accounts for 87% of live sheep exports. All shipments in the evidence departed Fremantle, with two beginning in Adelaide to load sheep from South Australia. In the past, high mortalities have been associated with the export of sheep from Port Adelaide during winter. Several independent reviews commissioned by the Australian Government have called for these 'high risk' exports to be reconsidered.

What are the economics of live sheep export?

Most Australian sheep producers do not export their sheep. Research conducted by Pegasus Economics has found that for the vast majority of WA farmers who sell sheep to the live trade, this is a 'side-line' business and represents 0.1% of their annual income. These producers generate most of their income from cropping. Even specialist sheep farmers generate just 0.5% of their income from the sale of sheep to the live trade. You can read this report [here](#).

The live sheep trade from Australia to the Middle East is a small and diminishing trade, increasingly being replaced by chilled and boxed meat exports to the region – now our largest importer of sheep meat. To the Middle East, the live trade is worth less than a third of the sheep meat trade. Globally, Australian sheep meat exports are worth 11 times more than live sheep exports.

INDUSTRY RESPONSES

Industry has agreed to reduce stocking density by 15%

Reducing the crowding by such a minimal degree has already proved ineffective and the Department of Agriculture has acknowledged this by rejecting the exporter's 15% stocking density reduction. The footage gathered over five months already shows pens with reduced stocking densities (of between 7% and 15%).

When a ship inevitably hits heat and humidity in the Middle Eastern summer the ventilators are just blowing hot, humid and often toxic ammonia-filled air at the sheep. Ventilators do not reduce the temperature. Over-crowding exacerbates heat stress but isn't the cause of it. When a ship hits equatorial waters during extreme heat it doesn't matter if you have one or 1,000 sheep in a pen, they will succumb to heat stress.

It is an ASEL requirement that all sheep have access to food and water on demand. Research has concluded that in order to meet this requirement, stocking densities would need to be reduced by at least 50%.

Exporters have actively opposed any reduction in stocking density due to the impact on profits.

Industry will rotate the first ports of arrival in the Middle East so full ships do not enter the hottest ports fully loaded (Doha, Kuwait, Oman)

Catastrophic shipments have occurred in recent years regardless of the first port of call, including death spikes as ships enter the Persian Gulf before reaching any first port. Heightened death rates often continue between ports regardless of the number of stock still aboard.

Mortalities have been decreasing

On the contrary, there has been no significant reduction in mortality over the past 15 years. Sheep have continued to die on board ships at more than 10 times the rate they die on Australian farms. The industry also has a history of under-reporting mortalities so recorded deaths can only be considered a conservative estimate. It should also be remembered that while thousands of sheep die at sea each year, *all* animals on board these shipments are subjected to unnecessary distress and suffering.