

ACROSS LAND AND SEA: LIVE EXPORT EXPLAINED



This Fact Sheet provides teachers with the information they need to educate students about the welfare issues associated with the live export of animals across land, air and sea.

Voiceless

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ABOUT VOICELESS

Voiceless, the animal protection institute, is an independent non-profit think tank working to promote respect and compassion for animals. By encouraging critical thinking on animal protection issues and growing the field of animal law, Voiceless equips today's youth to become tomorrow's changemakers.

ABOUT APE

Developed by educators for educators and aligned with the Year 7-10 Australian Curriculum, Voiceless Animal Protection Education (APE) resources encourage students to think critically about important animal protection issues. APEs provide teachers with the information and tools they need to deliver complete lessons in the classroom. Access our free online resources below and for more info, read our [Philosophy and FAQs](#).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Accompanying resources can be accessed on the Voiceless website: www.voiceless.org.au/schools/

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What is Live Export?

Have you ever thought about where your food, clothes, books, mobile phones, and computers come from?

Many of the products we use or consume every day may have travelled a considerable distance before they arrive in our hands.

Exporting goods from one country to another (known as **international trade**) is a common practice and one that many countries rely on to boost economies.

But what happens when living creatures become **commodities**, to be sold and transported around the world? This is known as the live export trade. What does the term **live export** really mean?

Live export refers to the commercial exportation of living animals between countries for various purposes, including slaughter or breeding. Sometimes they are referred to as 'living cargo'.¹ See the Glossary on p. 39 for definitions of '**slaughter stock**' and '**breeding stock**'.



Many of these journeys cover extremely long distances, which can span weeks at sea or many hours in the air flying between countries or continents. In particular, sea travel is often an arduous, uncomfortable and stressful experience for the animals on board and one in which casualties and loss of life is inevitable.

In fact, all stages of live export pose risks to **animal welfare**; from leaving the farm on trucks, to the conditions on ships, trains, and aircraft, to their arrival at foreign destinations.²

Note: words in **bold** are defined in the Glossary at the end of this booklet. Access more definitions online on the [Voiceless Animal Protection Encyclopedia](#).

CRITICAL THINKING CORNER



ARE LIVE ANIMALS REALLY CARGO?



Do you think living animals are equivalent to other types of inanimate cargo on ships and planes?

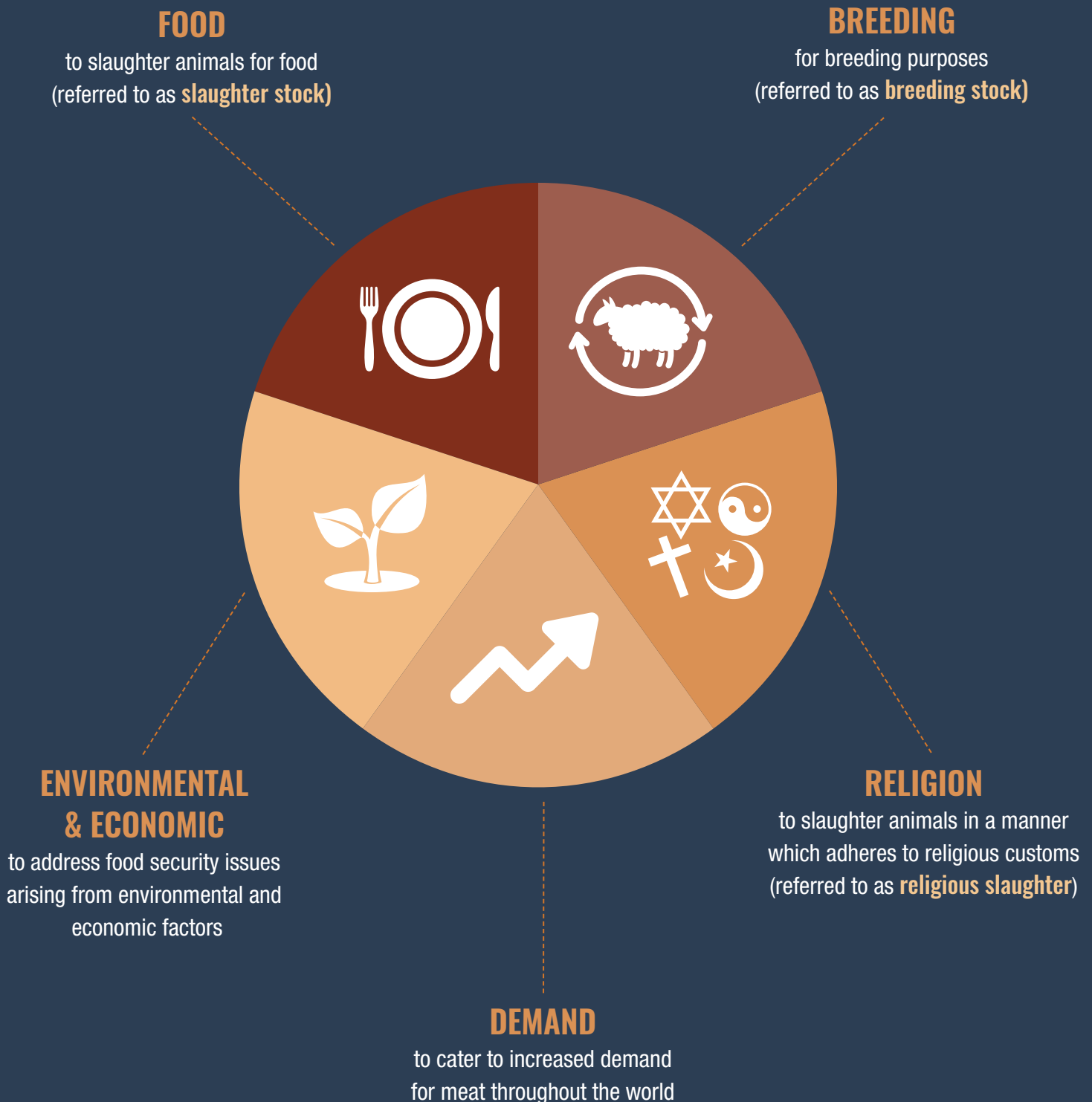


Did you know that animals are considered **property** under the law? Learn more about the legal status of animals in the [Voiceless Legal Personhood Video](#) and [Legal Personhood Fact Sheet](#).



Why Do Countries Use Live Export?

There are various reasons countries use live export, including:



Increased Demand for Meat

The demand for meat is growing globally. Australia, the United States of America and Argentina are amongst the highest consumers of meat and animal products in the world.³



3

OF THE HIGHEST CONSUMERS

However, with the rise of plant-based foods and cell-grown alternatives, growing awareness of animal protection issues, and recommendations from global health and environmental protection authorities to reduce meat consumption, the desire for animal meat may change in the years to come.

DID YOU KNOW?



Cultured meat or 'cell-based meat' is meat that is grown from cell cultures. Rather than slaughtering a living animal, the meat is grown via animal cells taken from a biopsy. As well as sparing the lives of millions of animals, this process has less environmental impact than traditional meat production. Although cultured meat is not yet available to buy in supermarkets, it is expected to be commercially available within the next few years. In fact, one restaurant in Israel has already started serving cell-based chicken.

Religious Considerations

Many countries around the world import live animals in order to slaughter them according to religious rituals and/or cultural traditions.

The two most common examples of **religious slaughter** are **Halal slaughter** and **Kosher slaughter**.

Indonesia, Malaysia, Israel and countries in the Middle East import live animals for this reason.

GLOSSARY STOP

breeding stock: Male and female animals who are used for the primary purpose of producing offspring.



Environmental Factors

Certain geographical locations have ideal conditions for growing food and raising animals. Numerous environmental factors are relevant for food production, including:

SOIL QUALITY



WATER SUPPLY



CLIMATE



Some countries with less fertile conditions choose to import food and live animals from overseas. For example, as the United Arab Emirates has little **arable** land, they import 80-90% of their food from other countries.⁴

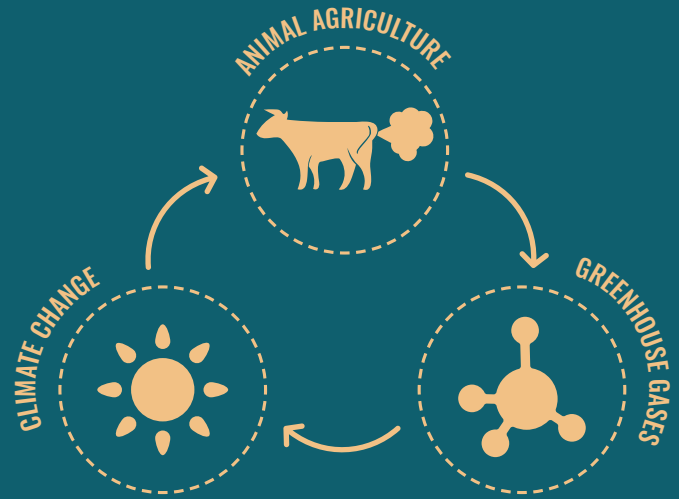
DID YOU KNOW?

Half of the world's habitable land is used for agriculture. Livestock production (meat and dairy) accounts for 77% of this land use.⁵



50%

OF HABITABLE LAND
USED FOR AGRICULTURE



Animal agriculture has a complex relationship with the natural environment. The process of breeding and raising farmed animals contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, further exacerbating climate change. In turn, climate change impacts on many aspects of agricultural production. For example, through changes in temperature, weather patterns, water availability, rainfall and sea levels.



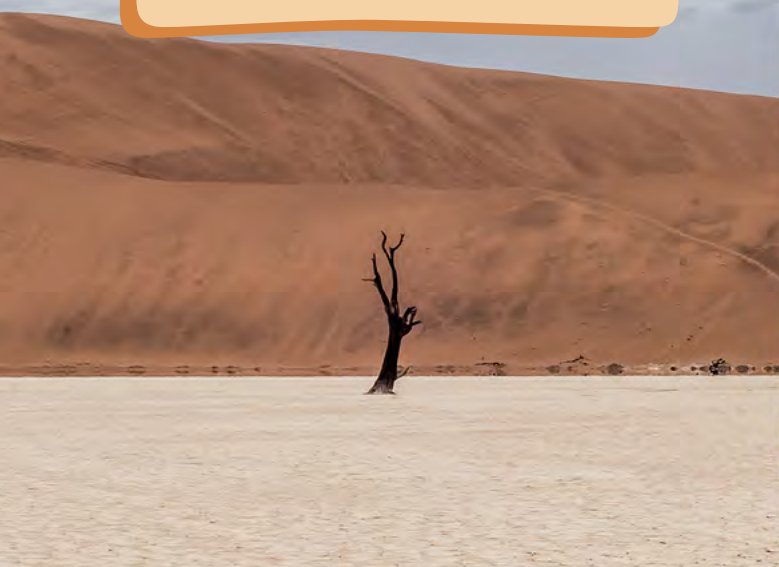
GLOSSARY STOP

food security: The state of having physical, social and economic access to affordable and nutritious food capable of sustaining dietary needs.

CRITICAL THINKING CORNER



In what ways does climate change impact on **food security**?



Which Animals are Exported?

Farmed animals who are shipped long distances in large numbers are often referred to as **livestock**. When people discuss the live export trade they primarily think of sheep, farmed birds, cattle, pigs and goats.

Although this Fact Sheet only considers the welfare issues facing farmed animals involved in the live export trade, it must be understood that a wide variety of animals are traded around the world, including horses, cats, dogs and exotic animals.

HORSES



ELEPHANTS



EXOTIC ANIMALS



CHICKS



DOGS



SHEEP



CATTLE



A Spotlight on a Global Trade

The United Kingdom & Ireland



In the United Kingdom, millions of newly born chicks, turkeys and ducklings are transported via air freight to Europe and countries throughout Asia. In 2018, 25 million were exported in order to become breeding stock.⁶

In Ireland, large quantities of unwanted calves are exported throughout the European Union. These calves are labelled 'unwanted' because they are male and serve no commercial purpose on dairy farms which only require the use of females for milk production. Many of these calves endure long sea voyages in order to be 'fattened' and slaughtered for **veal**.⁷

The Americas



Alongside Australia as major exporters of cattle are the USA, Brazil and Canada. Brazil exports millions of cattle every year to countries such as Lebanon, Egypt and Turkey.

Canada is in fact one of the leading live export traders, exporting over 16 million live birds in 2019 alone.⁸ Canada also sends horses by air freight as far as Japan where they are slaughtered for their meat, and it is permissible under the law to deny them food and water for up to 28 hours during transit.⁹ Pigs are also exported from Canada to the US for various purposes, including to be used as **breeding stock** and **feeder stock**.

The Netherlands and Denmark



The Netherlands and Denmark are two of the highest exporters of live farmed animals anywhere in the world, collectively transporting 28 million live animals in 2017 alone.¹⁰

Denmark exports millions of piglets to other countries every year. In 2018, 9.6 million pigs were exported, most of whom were piglets of about 10-12 weeks old.¹¹ Piglets travel across the border to Poland, where they are farmed at a lower cost. The trip can take up to 8 hours and the piglets travel in trucks – some of which are 5 floors high.¹² According to Danish law, each piglet must be given 0.2 square metres of space on board the truck, equivalent to almost one A4 piece of paper.¹³

Africa



A large portion of the sheep who arrive in the Middle East travel from the Horn of Africa. Each year, over 2 million sheep and goats travel through this region en route to ports for export.¹⁴ Export trucks have **high stocking densities**, often leading to **heat stress** and injury. For many years, the live export trade from this area was 'largely unregulated' but after disease broke out in 2001/02 regular monitoring was implemented.¹⁵

The animals sail across the Gulf of Aden to Saudi Arabia, often on ships not designed for animal transport. As a result of improper infrastructure, exported camels are tied down to the ship and often arrive sick and injured.¹⁶



Australia

Sheep were first exported from Australian shores 150 years ago,¹⁷ to help establish new colonies of animals in other countries (such as New Zealand).¹⁸ Australia is now one of the biggest exporters of live animals and the trade generates over \$800 million (AUD) each year.¹⁹ According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the live export trade contributes a 0.5% share of the country's major merchandise exports, ranking it 24th out of 80 commodities.²⁰

Primarily sheep, cattle and goats are transported from Australia via ships and aircraft to countries within South-East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. Some of these animals are used for breeding, but most are slaughtered for human consumption. Deer, camels, buffalo and alpacas are also exported from Australian shores to countries around the world, including Japan, Malaysia, South Korea and Vietnam.

New Zealand



Australia's neighbour, New Zealand (NZ), was once a major live sheep exporter. However, in 2003 the New Zealand Government responded to public concern and banned the live export of sheep for slaughter. This change was a result of significant public outcry regarding the welfare of sheep on shipments to the Middle East. The ban was later extended to cattle, deer and goats.

Although critics predicted the country's economy would suffer as a result of the ban, this was not the case. In fact, the former NZ Minister of Agriculture remarked that the country was not negatively impacted as a result of banning what he described as an 'appallingly bad trade'.²¹ As there are loopholes in the ban, and as live export for other purposes is still allowed (such as for breeding), there is currently a campaign to end all live export in NZ.²²



WELFARE ISSUES - LEAVING THE FARM

Leaving the Farm

Well before an animal is set to embark on the longest and most difficult experience of their life, they must first travel from farm to port, tightly packed in trucks alongside many others. Upon arrival, animals are rounded into assembly sheds or feedlots where they wait until it is time to board the ship.

In Australia, transportation via truck to ports can last up to 2 days.²³ Likewise, in Europe, trucks travel vast distances, often crossing borders, where they are regularly held up whilst documentation and checks are undertaken. At times, animals have to wait inside trucks until border offices open.²⁴



Conditions inside trucks are often cramped and sanitation measures are non-existent, meaning that animals are forced to stand in their own excrement and urine. There is no room to sit down, no room to rest and 'food and water provision is nearly always suspended during transportation'.²⁵ It is also routine for sheep and cattle to be denied access to feed and water for several hours prior to transport, known as **Food and Water Deprivation (FWD)**.²⁶

Long distance transportation via trucks or trains can be extremely stressful for animals. Some of the other welfare issues animals face are: 'lack of rest, overcrowding, insufficient headroom, extremes of temperature and humidity, inadequate ventilation and rough handling'.²⁷



Risks at Sea -

Animals Exported from Australian Shores

Although all forms of animal transportation present risks, the following section unpacks the major issues associated with sea travel from Australia.



How Long are Animals at Sea?

Sea voyages can range from a few days to a number of weeks.

AVERAGE VOYAGE LENGTH FROM AUSTRALIA



Average voyage lengths calculated using data from the Australian Government: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/>

IMAGE: ALEXLMX / SHUTTERSTOCK



Who is Responsible for the Welfare of Animals on Board?



Veterinarians

On voyages of 10 days or more, the Government requires that one registered veterinarian must be present.²⁸ This means that one vet may be in charge of the health and wellbeing of tens of thousands of animals.

Whistleblower Story: Dr Lynn Simpson

Ship veterinarian Dr Lynn Simpson became an industry **whistleblower** when she spoke out about the animal welfare issues she witnessed as the only vet on board 57 live export voyages.

[Read more on the Voiceless Blog.](#)



Independent Observers

Following a serious and widely publicised animal welfare incident in 2018, the Australian Government introduced **Independent Observers** on board vessels to monitor and report on how animal health and welfare is managed during sea voyages. Not all voyages are required to have an **Independent Observer** (IO) on board, and those that do are only required to have one IO regardless of the number of animals being transported. In 2020, the deployment of Independent Observers was temporarily paused due to the Covid-19 global pandemic.





Exporters

Ultimately, it is the exporters themselves who are responsible for the welfare of all animals on board their ships. Exporters must comply with the **Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL)** set out by the Australian Government which covers sea, land, and air transportation requirements.²⁹

Stockpersons

One **ASEL** requirement is to have accredited **stockpersons** on board, who care for the 'health, welfare, and physical needs' of the animals during loading, sailing and disembarking.³⁰ Unlike veterinarians, stockpersons have no veterinary medicine expertise.



CRITICAL THINKING CORNER



- ? Is it possible for one vet to provide an appropriate level of veterinary care for so many animals at one time?
- ? Why do you think the Government thought it was necessary to introduce **Independent Observers** on board ships?
- ? Is one **Independent Observer** able to 'see' and report on everything that happens on board a **live export** ship, carrying up to 70,000 animals?





Key Welfare Issues on Board Ships

Animals on board live export vessels face numerous welfare risks, including overcrowding, sanitation issues, **heat stress** and **ammonia** build-up. Many of these welfare issues are inherent to the process of live export, which relies on high **stocking densities** to ensure that voyages are profitable.



This lack of space reduces their **behavioural freedom**, most commonly the freedom to lie down.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding is a common welfare problem on board live export vessels, often contributing to the development of further welfare issues, including **heat stress** and injuries. Numbers can vary depending on the type of animal on board and the model of the ship. However, some ships can carry up to 70,000 animals in one voyage.³¹



Although there are rules governing acceptable **stocking density** on ships, animals are packed tightly next to each other in order to increase profits by reducing the costs of transport.³²

GLOSSARY STOP

behavioural freedom: The state in which an animal has the freedom to perform natural behaviours unique to them.

Research from simulated sea transport tells us that sheep 'become frightened of falling and not being able to get up again if other animals have occupied their space'.³³ This means that sheep must focus on their balance for the duration of a voyage - stepping backwards and forwards in order to remain upright as the ship sails through all types of conditions.

In a recent study of cattle in long distance transportation in the South of Chile, animal welfare scientists found that 'the space provided to an animal on board is crucial to perform essential behaviours, principally the maintenance of normal posture, **postural adjustments** and stability maintenance, without risk of injury or **physiological stress**'.³⁴



THOUGHT EXPERIMENT



To understand the space sheep are allocated on live export ships, imagine or mark out a 4 x 4 m² box.

Inside this box, 32 sheep are standing, weighing roughly 45kg each.³⁵

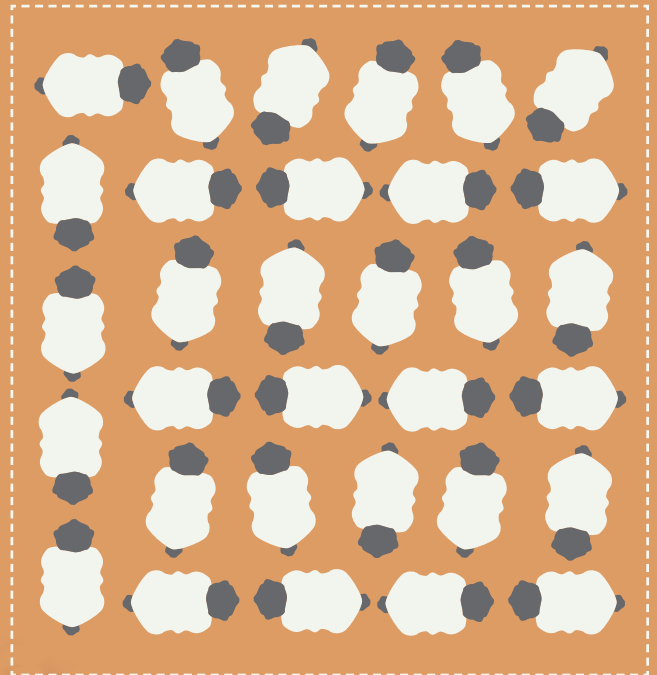
Do they have enough room to turn around?

What would happen if all of the sheep, or even half of them, would like to lie down to sleep?

How would you feel if you had to stand for an extended period of time, alongside many unfamiliar passengers for the duration of a long journey?

How would you feel if you had to push others for your right to adequate space?

Do you think this is okay for animals? Why? Why not?





Sanitation

With so many animals on board, sanitation is a major issue. More than 100,000 litres of urine and faeces can be produced every day on an average live export ship.³⁶



This is not only problematic in terms of how unhygienic the flooring becomes but poses other significant welfare risks, including slipping on wet flooring and potentially breaking or damaging their limbs. Or worse still, sitting or lying down in excrement and not being able to get back up again, sometimes resulting in death.

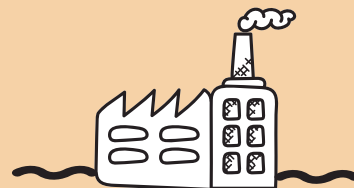


With so much urine and faeces present, lack of drainage on the ship floor, and a humid and hot climate, high levels of **ammonia** are inevitable.

Ammonia is a gas which causes irritation to the eyes, nose, and mouth and is developed from a build-up of urine.³⁷ To avoid high levels of **ammonia**, regular cleaning and good ventilation is required. However, many ships do not have adequate ventilation systems and are often not thoroughly cleaned until after the animals disembark.

DID YOU KNOW?

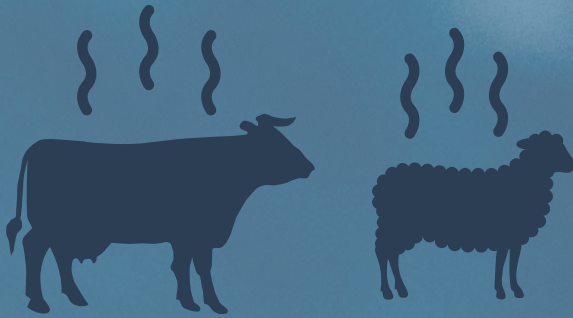
Welfare issues caused by overcrowding and poor sanitation are also faced by animals confined in factory farms. Read more about **factory farming** on the [Voiceless Hot Topics page](#).





Heat Stress

Heat stress is one of the major causes of death for cattle transported on long sea voyages.³⁸



Heat stress or Excessive Heat Load (EHL) occurs when animals are unable to effectively disperse body heat, causing their body temperature to rise above normal healthy levels.³⁹ Sheep travelling from the Australian winter into the Middle Eastern summer are particularly susceptible to such stress.

On live export vessels, it can be very difficult to provide adequate ventilation and temperature control on board. At sea, and whilst docking at some ports, particularly in the Northern hemisphere in summer, temperatures can soar well above 30°C.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sheep get sea sick!



According to recent studies, repetitive ship movements cause a type of sea sickness in sheep. However, sheep are rarely able to vomit – which, for humans, usually makes us feel much better.⁴⁰

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF HEAT STRESS INCLUDE:



**Excessive panting
with an open mouth**



**Difficulty
breathing**



**Staggering
and sweating**



Food and Water Deprivation

The transition from land to sea is a major adjustment, and animals take some time to get used to their new conditions. Some sheep struggle to switch from grazing on pastures to eating the pelleted feed provided on board. In certain cases, they completely refuse to eat, which can eventually lead to death.⁴¹



Dehydration, **inanimation**, and poor nutrition are all serious issues on live export voyages, with high **stocking densities** impacting on access to food and water.

GLOSSARY STOP

inanimation: A state of exhaustion caused by a lack of food and water.

Studies have shown that when animals are inhibited by space, they are at risk of losing weight due to difficulty in accessing the nutrients they require.⁴²

Food and water can also become contaminated with faecal matter leading to serious health problems. The placement of food and water is sometimes provided 'without careful consideration of the number of animals'.⁴³

With such dense numbers of animals in one place, access to **feed troughs** becomes both a fight and a matter of chance between those close to supplies and those placed at the back of the pen.





Pregnancy

According to the **Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL)**, when they arrive in destination countries, female cattle used for breeding must be no more than 190 days pregnant and **ewes** no more than 100 days pregnant.⁴⁴ Although certification of their pregnancy status must be proven before setting sail, breaches do occur, sometimes resulting in births at sea.⁴⁵

By Australian law, pregnant cattle and **ewes** should be given 15% more space on the ship.⁴⁶ But what if no one is aware she is pregnant?

DID YOU KNOW?

The Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System known as **ESCAS** does not apply to animals exported for breeding purposes. Read more about **ESCAS** on p. 25.



The chance of survival for lambs or calves born on live export ships is low. With already tight confines, a mother **ewe** may find it extremely difficult to feed her baby.

Death by trampling or lack of adequate nutrition is common, with the bodies sometimes thrown overboard. Offspring death in turn increases the likelihood of the mother's death, due to the possible onset of mastitis (a bacterial infection of the udder).⁴⁷

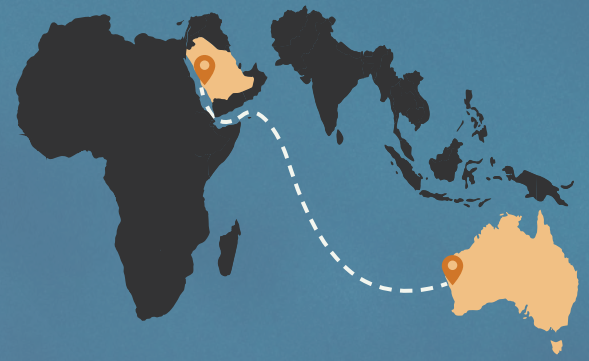


IMAGE: SUSAN GOODFELLOW / SHUTTERSTOCK





Case Study: The MV Cormo Express Disaster



Outcomes:

- The sheep were stranded in the Persian Gulf.
- The Australian Government purchased them from importers in an attempt to on-sell them to 30 different countries, with no success.
- 79 days after leaving Australia, the sheep were sold to Eritrea, an economically disadvantaged country of northeast Africa.
- Approximately 6,000 sheep died on board during the ordeal, with the incident sparking international outcry.
- The remaining sheep were slaughtered in makeshift abattoirs.
- The Australian Government temporarily banned live export from Australia to Saudi Arabia, but the trade resumed again in 2005.
- The New Zealand Government banned the export of live sheep for slaughter.

This summary draws on information from RSPCA Australia, 'A Timeline of Tragedy'

Can you think of other trades or industries throughout history that have been phased out or banned? What factors led to the ban? What are some attitudes towards that trade or industry now?





Do Animals Die at Sea?

On most live export voyages, a certain number of animals die at sea.

The Australian Government sets acceptable **mortality rates**, meaning the percentage of animals on board who can die during the voyage without requiring government investigation. These are considered to be normal and routine animal deaths, an inherent part of the live export process.

GLOSSARY STOP

inherent cruelties: The negative animal welfare impacts that are an intrinsic and inevitable part of intensive **animal agriculture** processes.

For example, the welfare issues experienced by animals held in intensive confinement in factory farms due to their close proximity and inability to perform natural behaviours.

For example, for sheep exported by sea, the acceptable mortality rate is 1% of the total number of sheep on board.⁴⁸

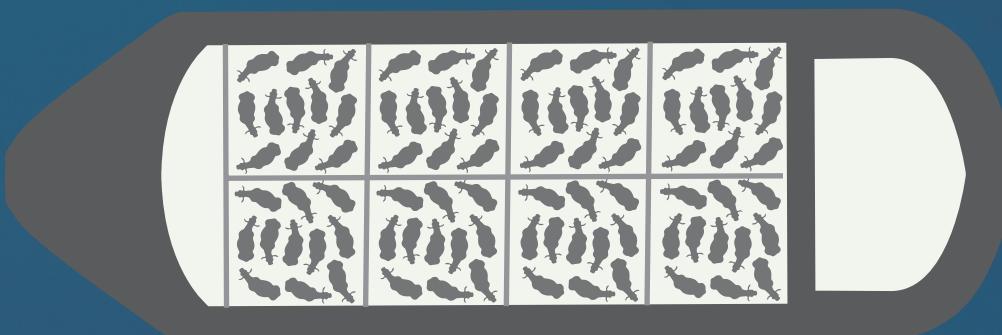
Sheep export voyages during the Middle Eastern summer have often resulted in high mortality rates, generally double the average.⁴⁹

This was the case on board the Awassi Express voyage in 2017. In this incident, 2400 sheep died from **heat stress** when temperatures on board climbed beyond their heat stress threshold.

Stocking density and **heat stress** are two key factors which contribute to animal mortalities at sea, however, all welfare issues can contribute to some degree.

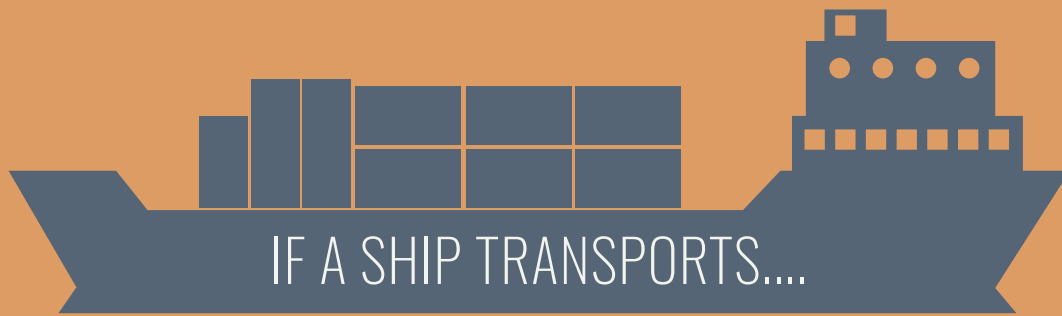
Of the 63,804 sheep on board, the death rate stood at 3.76% - well beyond the reportable **mortality rate** at the time of 2%.

The public witnessed the conditions on board due to an exposé aired on the TV show *60 Minutes*, featuring footage captured by an officer on the ship.⁵⁰ In response to subsequent public outcry, the Australian Government passed various reforms designed to improve live export regulation, and the exporter responsible for the voyages had their licence cancelled.

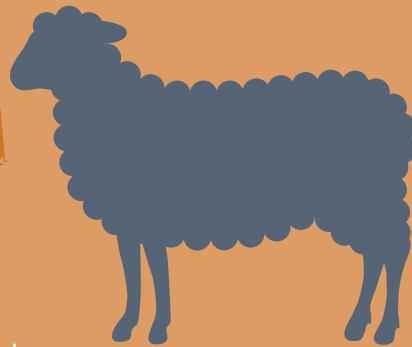




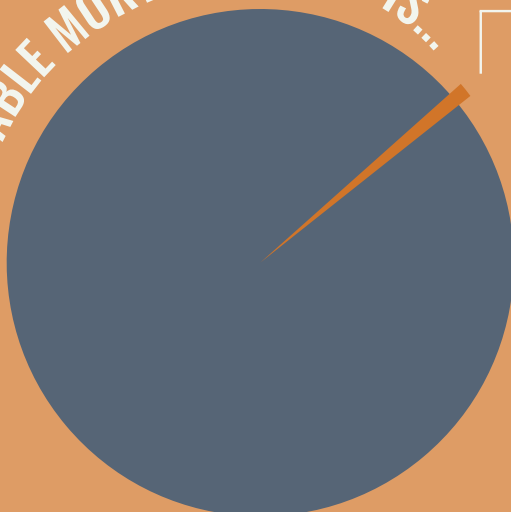
How Many Sheep Does the Government Allow to Die at Sea?



**50,000
SHEEP**



THE ACCEPTABLE MORTALITY RATE IS...



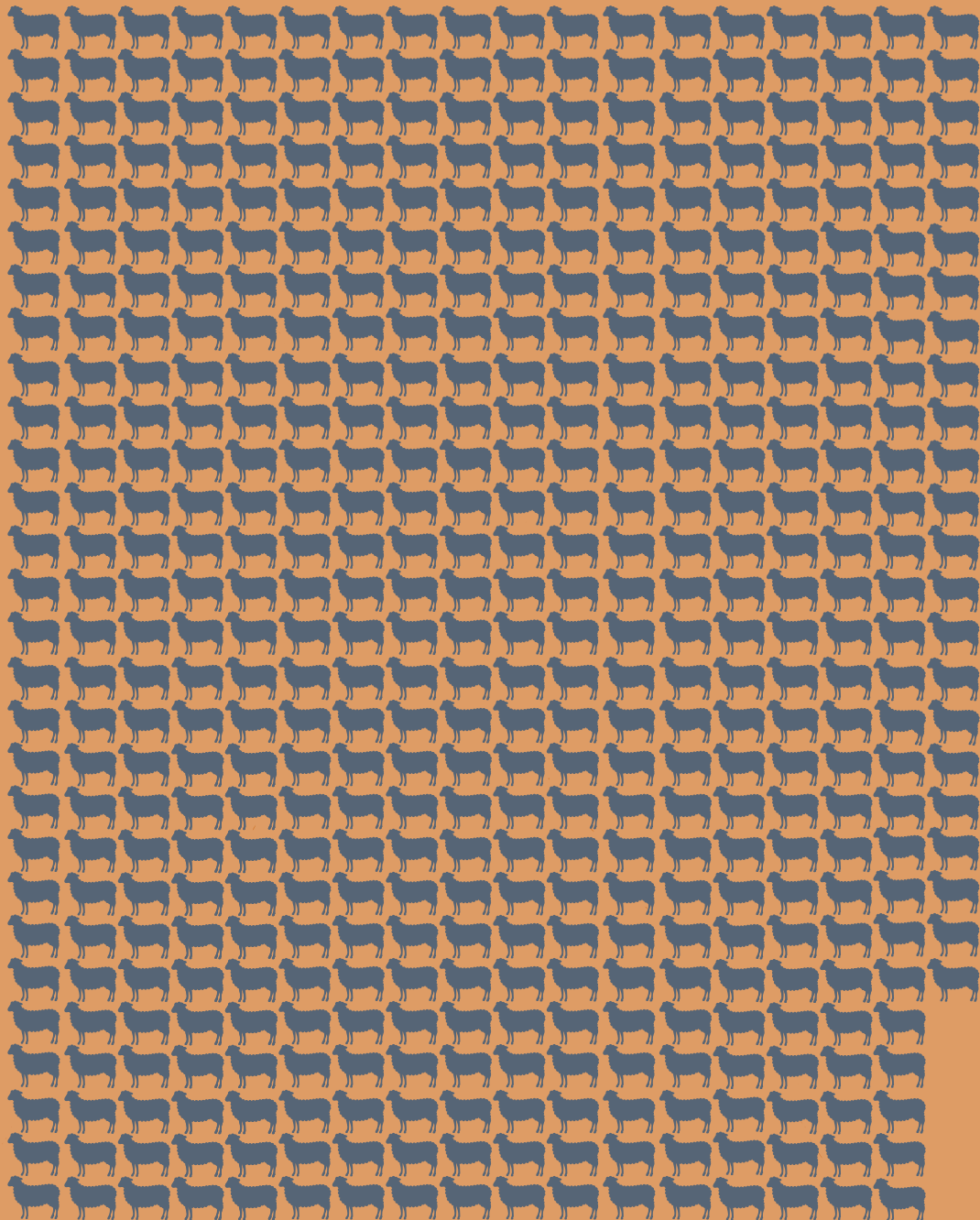
1%
OF THE
TOTAL
NUMBER
OF SHEEP
ON BOARD



**1% OF 50,000 SHEEP =
500 SHEEP ALLOWED TO DIE AT SEA**



BEFORE WARRANTING
GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION





Upon Arrival

On arrival, animals are subject to various welfare risks, which can be caused by the following:



adjustments to new and extreme temperatures



long waiting periods before disembarking ships



being confined for long periods of time in car boots for personal **slaughter**



rough handling when disembarking and re-loading onto trucks



further periods of long transportation to **feedlots** and/or **slaughterhouses**



a range of **slaughter** methods, including unskilled and sometimes illegal methods, which cause pain and suffering





Who is Responsible for Animals

When They Arrive at Their Destination?

Once animals arrive at their intended destination, the welfare laws from their country of origin no longer apply and responsibility for their welfare is now in the hands of their new owners.

This presents several problems and is another controversial aspect of the live export trade.

Australia has tried to extend exporter responsibility for the welfare of animals upon arrival through the establishment of a supply chain system known as 'ESCAS' (Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System).⁵¹

Unfortunately, there have been many reported breaches of this system resulting in animal welfare violations. As these breaches demonstrate, it is very difficult to ensure compliance with animal **welfare standards** once animals have left Australian shores.

What Happens When the Rules are Broken?



SINCE 2012

183 REPORTS

OF ESCAS BREACHES

Since 2012, there have been 183 reports of **ESCAS** breaches.⁵² Breaches in export destinations can be difficult for the Government to detect, which is why many breaches have been reported by animal protection organisations. Although the Government does have ways to punish exporters who break the rules, historically they have been hesitant to apply significant penalties.

CRITICAL THINKING CORNER



Does investigating the live export industry fall only on Governments, or do we, as citizens, have a duty to take an interest in such issues?



Live Export: Law and Policy

To learn more about the laws and policies governing live export in Australia, visit the [Voiceless Live Export Hot Topics page](#) for further information.



The Debate:

Should We Ban Live Export in Australia?

The live export trade is a contentious industry and varying views exist on whether it should be allowed to continue in Australia. The table below explores three common positions in relation to the question: 'Should we ban live export in Australia?'

GLOSSARY STOP

fundamental rights: The basic freedoms and protections required to lead a healthy life in dignity, such as the rights to life, health and liberty.

POSITION 1

Ban the trade because animals have rights

The first position - 'Ban the trade because animals have rights' - is an example of an animal rights argument. Many rights advocates believe that animals are entitled to enjoy **fundamental rights**, such as the rights to life, health and liberty. They challenge the **property** status of animals and disagree with the idea that it is morally acceptable for humans to use animals for human purposes. For animal rights advocates, regardless of the welfare conditions on board the ships, live export is unacceptable because it violates the basic rights of the individual animals on board. Tip: See the [Voiceless Legal Personhood APE](#).



POSITION 2

Ban the trade because animal welfare cannot be protected

The second position - 'Ban the trade because animal welfare cannot be protected' - is an example of a welfarist argument. Animal welfarists are concerned with how well animals are coping with their environment - whether they are experiencing positive or negative wellbeing. They believe it is morally acceptable for humans to use animals for human purposes, so long as that use does not cause unjustifiable or unreasonable pain or suffering.

For some animal welfarists, the live export trade is unacceptable because although it is an acceptable use of animals (transporting animals for slaughter/breeding for human purposes), it causes unjustifiable pain and suffering. Those supporting a ban also tend to believe that due to the global nature of the trade, it is impossible for the Australian Government to adequately regulate animal welfare throughout the supply chain.



POSITION 3

Continue the trade but improve animal welfare regulation

The third position - 'Continue the trade but improve animal welfare regulation' - is also an example of a welfarist argument. However, supporters of this view maintain that the Government can adequately regulate animal welfare in the live export industry by making improvements to the laws, policies, and procedures governing the trade. Accordingly, they view live export as an acceptable use of animals, and believe that any animal suffering involved can be reduced to a justifiable level.



Debating the Ethics and Economics of Live Export

POSITION 1

Ban the trade because animals have rights



Welfare and rights arguments

Long voyages by sea, land, and air subject millions of animals to stress, illness, and sometimes death.

Regardless of the welfare issues, the animals being exported possess rights to life, health and liberty. Breeding, transporting and slaughtering animals for human purposes violates these rights.

Outcomes and alternatives

The trade should be banned because humans have no right to trade animals as property.

Switching to **box-chilled meat** is not an adequate solution, as it still involves animal suffering and death.

Economic arguments

Economic considerations are irrelevant when discussing rights breaches.

Animals are living beings with rights, not human **property** with an economic value.

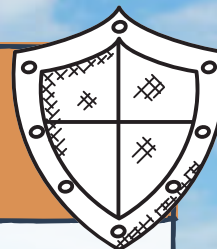
The Government has a moral obligation to protect the rights of animals, and any economic loss that may result cannot be used as a reason for inaction.



Debating the Ethics and Economics of Live Export

POSITION 2

Ban the trade because animal welfare cannot be protected



Welfare and rights arguments

The Government will never be able to adequately supervise what happens on board ships and in destination countries where the Government has no legal authority.

It is not possible to transport such large volumes of animals across the world at such high **stocking densities** without causing animal welfare issues. As the trade is not economically profitable if these stocking densities are significantly reduced, the trade itself is not sustainable.

Outcomes and alternatives

Phase out the live trade and replace it with **box-chilled meat**, sparing millions of animals around the world the suffering and stress involved with live export.

Enables the Australian Government to ensure that Australian animal **welfare standards** are met, whilst still providing an export option for Australian farmers.

Economic arguments

The economic benefits of the trade cannot outweigh the unjustifiable and inevitable animal welfare issues.

The chilled meat trade is an economically beneficial trade, which is growing in demand globally.

Transitioning to a chilled meat and carcass trade would require the construction of more slaughterhouses, which would create more jobs in meat processing and assist local economies.

Debating the Ethics and Economics of Live Export

POSITION 3

Continue the trade but improve animal welfare regulation



Welfare and rights arguments

Exporters argue that although there are welfare issues in the trade, these issues can be adequately addressed through improved regulation.

Animal **welfare standards** and laws exist to protect animals from maltreatment.

Animals are the legal property of their owners and as such can be traded.

Outcomes and alternatives

Changes should only be made to regulations and the trade itself should continue.

Switching to **box-chilled meat** is not an adequate solution to the issue, for various reasons, including:

- (1) Exporters and farmers will lose access to markets that demand live animals for slaughter.
- (2) It may mean that other countries with lesser welfare protections will cater to the demand for live animals.
- (3) The Australian economy may suffer.

Economic arguments

The trade supports agricultural jobs and provides the Australian agricultural sector with greater export markets, which in turn benefits Australia's economy.

There are certain overseas markets that won't accept **box-chilled meat** as a suitable alternative, so Australia will lose access to those markets.

It supports the economies of importing countries. If a chilled meat trade were to be implemented, job security (specifically those working in slaughterhouses) in importing countries may be threatened.

What do you think?
Which position do you think is most persuasive, and why?

Debating the Issues



Should Live Export be Banned in Australia?

Person A: We can't allow live export to continue because it's not possible to regulate the trade adequately. We shouldn't allow an industry to operate that can't be regulated properly and has so many issues, especially when the welfare and lives of millions of animals are at stake.



Person B: The live export industry is adequately regulated and we have plenty of laws and policies in place. The Government just needs to make sure that the industry complies with those laws and takes appropriate action when they fail to do so. We shouldn't ban a profitable Australian industry simply because it's difficult to regulate. We need to learn from our mistakes and continue to improve our systems.



Person A: The problem isn't just a need for more **law enforcement** – the fact is that it's simply impossible for the Australian Government to adequately regulate the welfare of animals on board vessels travelling outside of Australian jurisdiction and into foreign countries where the Government has no power. How can we know what happens to every single animal exported overseas? Numerous investigations have revealed significant animal welfare issues both on board the vessels (such as **heat stress**) and in destination countries (such as painful slaughter). And those are just the breaches we know about...

GLOSSARY STOP

law enforcement: The act of ensuring that the law is obeyed. Generally enforced by government agencies, such as the police force.



DID YOU KNOW?

Australia ranked second last on the **Voiceless Animal Cruelty Index** (VACI 2020). The VACI ranks the animal welfare performance of fifty countries selected amongst the largest livestock producers in the world. [Access the VACI here.](#)



Person B: All industries have their issues, no system is perfect. It's about how you respond to those issues that matters and Australia has introduced the **ESCAS** system to make exporters responsible for animal welfare throughout the supply chain. Yes, there are some exporters who have broken the rules, but on the whole this system is operating to improve animal welfare and to hold exporters accountable for their actions.



Person A: Even if **ESCAS** was working properly, it doesn't change the fact that there are **inherent cruelties** involved in the live export process. The Government accepts that for every voyage, a certain number of animals will die on board. For example, if a shipment has 50,000 sheep on board, it is considered acceptable for 500 of those sheep to die during the voyage. These deaths are an inevitable by-product of densely packing live animals onto ships for long periods of time. If the industry was to significantly improve animal welfare, profits would decrease because the **stocking densities** would have to be much lower. It would essentially mean that there would be little financial benefit to the trade. The only solution is to ban the live export industry and transition to **box-chilled meat**.



Person B: Transitioning to a **box-chilled meat** export trade is not a practical or preferable alternative. It would mean that Australia would lose access to markets that demand live animals for slaughter, and that countries with lesser welfare protections might step in to cater to the demand, which is a bad welfare outcome for the animals involved.



Person A: Australia needs to consider its own duties towards Australian animals and not base **government policy** on what other countries may or may not do if we leave the trade. Phasing out the live trade and replacing it with **box-chilled meat** will spare millions of animals the suffering and stress involved with live export, and will enable the Australian Government to ensure that Australian animal **welfare standards** are met, whilst creating jobs and providing an export option for Australian farmers.

CONSIDERING PERSPECTIVES

- 1 Which positions (see p. 27) do Person A and Person B align with?
- 2 How do you think someone adopting Position 1 might respond to their arguments?
- 3 Re-write the conversation to include the views of someone who aligns with an animal rights perspective. You can label them as Person C.

The Future of Live Export



The future of the live export trade around the world remains uncertain.



European Union

In Europe, there has been much discussion surrounding a potential ban on live animal exports outside the European Union (EU).

Germany

A German state recently declared that live export outside the EU would only take place 'if German animal protection standards are adhered to throughout the route'.⁵³



The Netherlands

Meanwhile, the Netherlands has taken a similar approach by refusing to allow exporters to send animals to places outside the EU where animal **welfare standards** cannot be guaranteed.⁵⁴

Israel

Israel has been debating phasing out the industry.



Australia

In Australia, several temporary bans have already taken place over the course of the last two decades.

Citizenship in Action –

The Movement to Ban Live Export in Australia

There has rarely been a time throughout the history of the trade in which the public, politicians and animal advocates have stayed silent on this issue. Campaigns to ban live animal exports range from grassroots petitions by concerned members of the public, to in-depth research and reporting by well-established animal advocacy organisations.

Since the late 1990's, animal protection organisations (such as Animals Australia, **RSPCA** Australia and Voiceless) have tried to hold the industry accountable through advocacy campaigns, reports and investigations.

Although there have been numerous accounts of misconduct within the industry, it was in 2011 that millions of Australians first bore witness to the brutal and cruel treatment of cattle in certain Indonesian abattoirs via a *Four Corners* television exposé called 'A Bloody Business'.⁵⁵

The collective effort of the media and animal advocates to bring this footage to the attention of the Australian public resulted in a six-week suspension of live cattle exports to Indonesia. The trade to Indonesia subsequently resumed, but the suspension sent a clear message to the industry that the trade's social licence was in jeopardy.

A 2019 public survey of close to 120,000 Australian citizens, revealed that 58%, or almost two thirds, of the participants 'somewhat or strongly agreed' with abolishing the Australian live export trade.⁵⁶



Given this public sentiment, unsurprisingly Australia has already made moves towards limiting the trade, introducing a ban on live sheep exports to the Middle East during the hottest summer months of the year (1 June – 14 September).⁵⁷ A number of politicians have put forward proposed legislation to ban or phase out the trade, and the Government has introduced a raft of reforms aimed at increasing industry accountability and compliance.

The Australian Government remains supportive of the trade, viewing it as a 'valuable Australian industry' creating jobs in rural and regional Australia.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the 'Ban Live Export' campaign continues to grow, leaving the future of the industry uncertain.

GLOSSARY STOP

social licence: When a project or industry has the approval and acceptance of the community and relevant stakeholders.



The live export trade is contentious. Most people agree that the welfare issues posed by exporting live animals across land and sea are legitimate and serious, yet there are varying views on whether the trade should be allowed to continue.

What do you think?

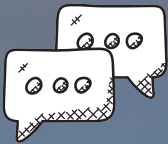
Question, Consider and Discuss.



QUESTION whether live export is **ethical** and should be allowed to continue.



CONSIDER the different views on this issue and decide for yourself where you stand.



DISCUSS with your friends, family, classmates and teachers. Debating complex issues is healthy and helpful.



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www.voiceless.org.au

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Vocabulary	Definition
ammonia	A pungent alkaline gas - compound of nitrogen and hydrogen. Heavily soiled floors from urine on live export ships and in factory farms can produce ammonia.
animal agriculture	Growing, rearing, and managing livestock to produce a variety of animal products for commercial sale.
animal welfare	How an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives.
arable	Suitable for growing and cultivating food.
Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL)	The standards set out by the Australian Government which specify the minimum requirements for animal health and welfare that exporters must meet when transporting animals by sea and air.
behavioural freedom	The state in which an animal has the freedom to perform natural behaviours unique to them.
box-chilled meat	Box-chilled meat is fresh or frozen animal meat/carcass, sold locally or exported to foreign markets.
breeders	Animals used to produce offspring.
breeding stock	Male and female animals who are used for the primary purpose of producing offspring.
commodities	Goods which can be bought, sold and traded.
cultured meat	Meat that is grown from cell cultures (also known as 'cell-based meat'). Rather than slaughtering a living animal, the meat is grown via animal cells taken from a biopsy.
ethical	Adhering to moral principles concerning beliefs on what is morally 'right' and 'wrong'.
ewe	The name given to identify a female sheep.
Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS)	A system put in place by the Australian Government to ensure exporter accountability for the welfare of animals exported to overseas destinations. The system monitors the welfare, handling, slaughter methods and traceability of the animals through the supply chain.
feeder stock	'Feeder' is the term given to cattle who are fattened in feedlots prior to slaughter.
feedlot	A yard or pen used to contain and feed livestock mechanically or by hand, with the purpose of increasing the weight of cattle and sheep before sending them to slaughter.

Vocabulary	Definition
feed troughs	A long, low trough containing water or food used to feed animals.
Food and Water Deprivation (FWD)	A practice whereby animals are not provided with food and water before and/or during transport.
food security	The state of having physical, social and economic access to affordable and nutritious food capable of sustaining dietary needs.
fundamental rights	The basic freedoms and protections required to lead a healthy life in dignity, such as the rights to life, health and liberty.
government policy	The positions, principles, plans and procedures created by governments regarding specific matters. Governments use policy to help them make decisions on important issues, such as environmental policy to address environmental problems.
Halal slaughter	A method of animal slaughter compliant with Islamic law.
heat stress	Heat stress in animals occurs when they are unable to effectively disperse body heat, causing their body temperature to rise above normal healthy levels.
inanition	A state of exhaustion caused by a lack of food and water.
Independent Observer	A person, independent from both government and industry, who is required to monitor, record, and report on conditions and procedures on-board certain live export ships sailing from Australia to ensure animal health and welfare.
inherent cruelties	The negative animal welfare impacts that are an intrinsic and inevitable part of intensive animal agriculture processes. For example, the welfare issues experienced by animals held in intensive confinement in factory farms due to their close proximity and inability to perform natural behaviours.
international trade	The import and export of goods and services between countries.
Kosher slaughter	A method of animal slaughter compliant with the dietary laws of Judaism.
law enforcement	The act of ensuring that the law is obeyed. Generally enforced by government agencies, such as the police force.
live export	The commercial exportation of living animals between countries for various purposes, including slaughter or breeding.
livestock	Animals who are farmed such as sheep and cows for their ability to produce meat, leather, dairy and other animal derived products.

Vocabulary	Definition
mortality rate	A measure of the number of deaths in a specific population during a particular period of time. For example, on live export voyages the mortality rate refers to the percentage of animals on board who die during the voyage.
physiological stress	The activation of bodily systems in response to stressors, which aim to return the body back to a stable internal state.
postural adjustments	The act of making muscular adjustments in order to maintain one's stance or balance.
property	A thing owned by a legal person. Things do not have legal rights. Owners have various rights with respect to the things they own – including the rights to sell and destroy.
religious slaughter	The slaughter of animals according to religious customs and beliefs.
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)	A federation of separate Australian animal welfare organisations, including RSPCA Australia (national) and state/territory RSPCAs. RSPCAs have various functions, including operating animal rehoming shelters and investigating and prosecuting animal cruelty complaints.
slaughterhouse	A place where humans kill animals for their meat and bodily parts.
slaughter stock	Farmed animals who are reared for the purpose of being slaughtered for their meat, skins, and other animal products.
social licence	When a project or industry has the approval and acceptance of the community and relevant stakeholders.
stocking density	The concentration of animals within a particular area.
stockperson	A person who looks after livestock. For example, stockpersons on live export ships maintain the health and welfare of the animals on board.
veal	A meat product which is derived from young calves, generally male dairy calves.
Voiceless Animal Cruelty Index (VACI)	<u>The Voiceless Animal Cruelty Index</u> ranks the welfare performance of fifty countries selected amongst the largest livestock producers in the world.
welfare standards	Welfare standards, when referring to animals, are government guidelines designed to ensure a minimum level of adequate animal welfare, health and wellbeing.
whistleblower	A name given to a person who reveals secretive, unorthodox, unethical, or illegal behaviour of a company or organisation.

Teaching Resources

To accompany this Fact Sheet, Voiceless has created a series of cross-curricular lessons for Australian high school students in Years 9-10.



English - Year 10

'Live Export: The Great Debate'



Science - Year 10

'Ammonia: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly'



Civics & Citizenship - Year 9

'Citizenship in Action'



Visual Arts - Year 10

'The Power of the Picture'



Geography - Year 9

'Live Export and Geographical Issues'



Teacher Guide

Guidance, Tips and Additional Resources

Additional resources include an educational [video](#), [quiz](#), and the [Animal Protection Encyclopedia](#).

Animal Protection Education lessons are free to download from the Voiceless website – find everything you need at: voiceless.org.au/schools/live-export/

"It is about making **well rounded citizens** who move out into the world and have the ability to **think critically** and make **responsible decisions**."

SHARYN RIX, ENGLISH, DRAMA & LOTE TEACHER, NSW

