

31 January 2022

Dr Carol Sheridan
Animal Welfare Branch
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
GPO Box 858
Canberra ACT 2601



**SHEEP
PRODUCERS
AUSTRALIA**

Via email: animal.welfare@agriculture.gov.au

Dear Dr Sheridan,

Re: Review of live sheep exports by sea to, or through, the Middle East during the Northern Hemisphere summer: Draft Report

Sheep Producers Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's *Review of live sheep exports by sea to, or through, the Middle East during the Northern Hemisphere summer*.

Sheep Producers Australia is the voice on issues that affect Australian sheep production businesses. As the successor entity to Sheepmeat Council of Australia which formed in 1978, Sheep Producers Australia is the peak industry organisation representing the sheepmeat sector. The Australian sheepmeat industry has a long history of producing safe, quality sheepmeat for customers around the world. The industry continues to strive through strategic planning and collaboration to be the leading supplier of lamb and sheepmeat to global customers to meet growing demand for our premium product, the success of which has seen the total off-farm meat value grow to over \$7.2 billion¹. Sheep production is an integral part of Australia's regional landscape and communities, with lamb and mutton production contributing 8% to the total farm value of \$66.6 billion estimated in 2019-2020². Sheep Producers Australia works daily to enhance the industry's productivity, profitability and sustainability by representing all producers to industry decision-makers and stakeholders.

Sheep Producers Australia and its state-farming organisation members share a commitment with the Australian Live Exporters' Council (ALEC) and its exporter members to high animal welfare standards that underpin Australia's reputation as a trusted supplier of high-quality livestock.

As you are no doubt aware, the live export sector is essential to farming systems across Australia, and is of critical importance to Western Australian producers. It plays a significant role in underpinning lamb and sheep prices by providing increased competition, is complementary to wool and boxed meat production systems and satisfies the needs of important markets that cannot be met through the export of chilled and frozen sheepmeat. It will continue to be a significant sector in Australia's post-pandemic economic recovery and contribute positively to the overall value of Australia's red meat industry.

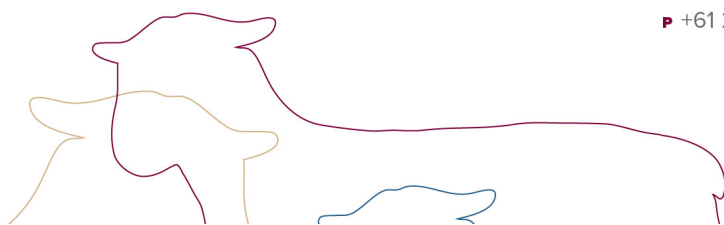
¹ [Meat & Livestock Australia's Fast Facts 2020: Australia's sheepmeat industry](#)

² [ABARES Agricultural Commodities September 2019](#)

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The live sheep export trade is the prime outlet for young and aged Merino wethers once pasture quality declines in spring and plays a crucial role in improving farm system resilience. The flexibility to sell into the live export market at any time throughout the year enables farm businesses to be more productive; it gives farmers the confidence to run optimum stocking rates, hold stock for longer during difficult seasons and manage pasture more effectively. The moratorium on the live sheep trade removes an important risk management tool available to sheep farmers in the sheep regions of Australia that experience a strongly Mediterranean climate with highly variable seasons and rely on access to this market during poor seasons³.

The Middle East is a region with particular strategic importance for the sheep industry. Our markets for Australian live sheep in the Middle East remain integral to the success of Western Australian sheep producers. The extant regulations present challenges for Australian producers to compete in an evolving global market, and for exporters to supply these markets economically and competitively. Our customers are being forced to procure livestock from alternative destinations such as South Africa, Romania, and Spain, which do not have equivalent animal welfare safeguards.

For these reasons, Sheep Producers Australia supports a viable and successful live export trade to the Middle East and supports ALEC's proposal for trial periods at the start and end of the current moratorium period, with exemptions granted for voyages that can be demonstrated to be minimal risk to animal welfare. Under these trial period arrangements, shipments to both Gulf and Red Sea destinations should be allowed to sail until 21 June at the start of the moratorium and from 23 August for Red Sea destinations and from 1 September for Gulf destinations at the end of the moratorium period. A LiveCorp monitoring program would be in place for these voyages to both collect performance data and to monitor animal welfare alongside safeguards exporters themselves would have in place. This process would allow voyage data to be gathered and ensure that future regulatory arrangements are based on evidence and supported by science, which will place the industry on a more sustainable footing.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the draft report. Should you wish to discuss this submission further, please don't hesitate to contact me on 0412 472 710 or at ceo@sheepproducers.com.au.

Yours sincerely



Bonnie Skinner
A/g Chief Executive Officer
Sheep Producers Australia

³ Mercado: [Impact of the Live Sheep Export Trade's Self-Imposed Moratorium and Regulatory Changes](#), 2020

