

In 2008, Australia exported 4.2 million sheep, 860,000 cattle and 3,118 goats<sup>1</sup>. Countries throughout the Middle East and South East Asia represent our largest market; the vast majority of live animals exported from Australia are destined for slaughter.

The RSPCA is opposed to the export of live animals for slaughter because of the stress, injury and disease endured during long distance transport and the cruel handling, transport and slaughter practices in importing countries. The most urgent welfare concern is the export of sheep to the Middle East.

#### **Why does Australia export live sheep?**

Australian sheep are exported to the Middle East to meet a demand for live animals for Halal slaughter. However, we also export chilled and frozen meat to every country we export live animals to and have Halal-certified export abattoirs currently supplying high quality Halal meat to the Middle East.

#### **What is Halal slaughter?**

Halal slaughter is done in accordance with strict Muslim requirements and requires both the carotid artery and the jugular vein of the animal to be severed resulting in death from blood loss. In Australia, Islamic leaders have approved the use of electrical stunning to render the animal unconscious prior to slaughter, reducing pain and suffering. Stunning is not carried out in the Middle East.

#### **How long are the journeys?**

Sheep exported to the Middle East can face a journey of up to 35 days from leaving the farm in Australia to arriving at their destination. Cattle exported from Australia to Southeast Asia undertake sea voyages that may last up to 10 days.

#### **How many animals die during transport?**

In 2008 more than 35,000 sheep died on the ships before they reached the Middle East. More than 1,000 cattle also died last year on sea voyages. Many more may succumb to illness or injury during the voyage and after arrival.

#### **How do these animals die?**

Most deaths at sea are caused by a failure to eat the unfamiliar pellet diet that is their major source of food during the trip. Salmonellosis caused by stress and overcrowding is another common cause of death, and sheep also die due to heat stress and/or physical trauma.

#### **What are Australia's live export standards?**

The Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) cover animals from on-farm sourcing to export but the majority of these standards are effectively unenforceable and cannot prevent deaths at sea. They offer no protection to Australian animals once they are on foreign soil.

#### **Do importing countries have animal welfare laws?**

None of the countries Australia sends animals to have animal protection laws equivalent to ours - many have none at all. Video evidence obtained by animal welfare investigators throughout the Middle East continues to expose rough transport and handling and cruel slaughter practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Norris, R, and Norman, G (2008) 'National livestock export industry shipboard performance report'.