Maritime export of livestock from Australia:

Regulatory requirements for animal welfare and recent reforms

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Australia is a major exporter of live animals

Agricultural surplus

With a population of around 25 million people and 3.7 million km² of agricultural land, Australia produces a significant exportable surplus of agricultural commodities, approximately 70% of produce are exported. Australia exported 2.3 million head of livestock in 2018-19.

Production systems, particularly those remote from east coast population centres, are geared towards export of live animals, with cattle from northern Australia and sheep from Western Australia being major exports.
Australia is a major exporter of live animals

High animal health status and superior genetics

Australia produces high quality livestock, particularly beef and dairy cattle, and wool and meat sheep. The animals are popular for breeding and meat for consumption.

Australia’s livestock export industry has a 150 year history with various levels of regulation. Significant effort is currently being made to update the regulatory framework.
Regulation of livestock exports from Australia

Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Responsible for the regulation of livestock throughout the export chain.

- Exporters pay a fee for service to cover overall program cost, including veterinary services.

Australian Maritime Safety Authority
Responsible for the regulation of livestock vessels.

- Ensure vessels are capable of safely transporting livestock.
Agriculture’s Regulatory Framework Summary

- Export Control Act 1982
- Export Control (Orders) Regulations 1982
- Export Control Orders – including:
  - Export Control (Prescribed Goods - General) Order 2005
  - Export Control (Fees) Orders 2001
  - Export Control (Animals) Order 2004
    - Approved arrangements
    - Government certificates
    - Registered premises
    - Audit
    - ESCAS
    - ASEL

  - Various repeals, consequential amendments and provisions Acts

- AMLI Regulations 1998
  - AMLI (Export Licensing) Regulations 1998

- AMLI Orders – including:
  - AMLI (Standards) Order 2005 - includes ASEL
  - AMLI (Conditions on Live-stock Export Licences) Order 2012
  - AMLI Orders - various LAE specific

- Various - AMLI declarations of donors, research and marketing bodies
Export Supply Chain Assurance Scheme (ESCAS)

Exported livestock must be traceable
Exporters must deliver livestock into approved ESCAS facilities.
Facilities must be able to account for the whereabouts of animals at all times.
Movement of animals along approved supply chains must be recorded.
Breaches of these requirements may result in suspension of facilities.

Treatment consistent with OIE standards
World Animal Health Organisation (OIE) animal welfare standards must be met.
This applies from unloading up to and including slaughter.
ESCAS does not apply to breeder livestock due to practical constraints.
Review of Australia’s livestock export regulation

Since May 2018, Australia has worked to improve animal welfare regulations for exported livestock, based on

• livestock heat stress assessment,
• improved animal welfare measures, and
• greater transparency.

Various improvements made as a result

Sheep now have more space, better access to water and fresh air.

No export during the hot summer months (June, July, August and half of September)

Independent observers in addition to accredited veterinarians and stock people on-board.

Whistle blower provisions included.
Independent Observers

The government is committed to transparent regulation of the trade

Independent observers provide the department with direct insight into the conditions during livestock export voyages to support the effective regulation of the live animal export trade.

- This program commenced in April 2018, more than 200 summaries of Independent Observer Reports are available at www.agriculture.gov.au
- From October 2019, the requirement for independent observers to accompany low-risk, short-haul livestock export voyages was removed.

Publishing summary observer reports aimed at reassuring the public that any regulatory action required occurs in a timely fashion.

- Significant issues are addressed regardless of publication schedule.
Australia’s live animal import requirements

Australia has stringent requirements for live animal imports including:

• Companion, zoo and laboratory animals.
• Horses, birds and livestock.
• Reproductive material.
• See the following websites for detailed information.

Questions?

More info


NB agriculture is transitioning to a new website at https://www.awe.gov.au/