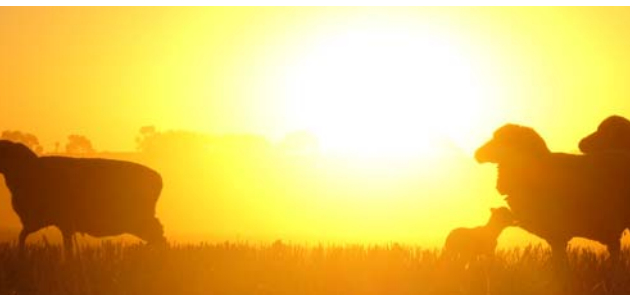


Special Issue on livestock exports

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| Sheepmeat producers from around Australia sit on the Council making decisions that deliver results to the industry as a whole. | SCA works on policy issues at the national level that matter most to your profitability and sustainability on-farm. | With close industry ties here and overseas plus a strong relationship with the Federal Government, SCA is positioned to represent and promote your interests. |

We are sheepmeat producers too. From the President

In this special issue of our industry newsletter, I'm pleased to report that the Sheepmeat Council of Australia, with the Australian Livestock Exporters' Council, is helping to drive major cultural and operational change in relation to animal welfare in our key Middle Eastern export markets.

The Middle East is our biggest export market and was worth \$760 million last financial year. Industry has put a lot of effort into building the trade in chilled and frozen boxed product as well as live animals.

SCA has been coordinating industry efforts so that Australian sheep exported to our major Middle Eastern markets of Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar are processed in facilities that meet or exceed international animal welfare standards. Our efforts have been predominantly focused on bringing an end to private sales of Australian sheep to unknown slaughter points in these markets.

This work comes ahead of a new regulatory framework that will be implemented in all livestock export markets next year as a result of recommendations from the Farmer Review and the sheep and cattle Industry-Government Working Groups. It also complements the efforts of livestock exporters who are implementing plans through their supply chains to improve animal welfare in all Middle East markets.

Traditionally, families have purchased live sheep, transported them to their home and slaughtered them

as part of Eid al Adha. Through our work the governments and importers in these markets have now committed to a new system where once families have purchased a sheep it is processed in onsite or nearby facilities that comply with international animal welfare standards.

The agreement to end private sales in these markets represents a significant breakthrough in the face of entrenched cultural and religious beliefs and understandings.

While Australia has no authority to demand changes on foreign soil, industry is committed to implementing the new regulatory changes recommended by the Farmer Review and accepted by the Australian Government.

It is important that we stay in the market place in the Middle East, not only because of its economic significance, but also because we are the only country in that market working to improve animal welfare.

Kate Joseph
President



About SCA

SCA is the prescribed industry body for the nation's sheepmeat producers under the Australian Meat and Livestock Industry Act 1997.

SCA scrutinises the performance of, and strategies to be pursued by, levy funded bodies, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), Animal Health Australia (AHA) and the National Residue Survey (NRS).

SCA provides practical policy advice at the farm and industry level to the Federal Government. It's imperative producers have input into the Government's policy-making process and this is made possible through SCA with your input.

SCA is funded by membership subscriptions paid by State Farmer Organisations and through the industry activities it performs for all sheep and lamb levy payers as part of the Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC).

Subscribe to SCA e-newsletter!
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Australian sheepmeat industry outlines plan for improved animal welfare in the Middle East

Next year Australia will implement a new regulatory framework for the live trade of sheep, cattle and goats to all export markets following recommendations from the Farmer Review of livestock exports.

Ahead of the implementation of these changes the sheepmeat industry has been proactively working in its major Middle Eastern markets to support importers to bring an end to private sales of Australian sheep to unknown slaughter points.

Earlier this year, importers and importing governments in Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait committed to a 'no private sales' policy to unknown slaughter points for Australian sheep and agreed to process sheep onsite or nearby facilities that comply with global animal welfare standards.

This change will be particularly significant in the lead up to this year's Islamic religious festival, Eid al Adha. The festival is the peak period for live sheep sales.

SCA, as the policy group for sheepmeat producers, has directed the industry's service provider, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), to work with commercial operators in implementing necessary changes for Eid al Adha through the provision of specialist animal welfare skills and on-the-ground resources in Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait.

Complementing the sheepmeat industry's efforts in its three major markets, individual operators that export Australian sheep to other Middle Eastern markets are implementing plans to ensure they meet OIE standards, including during Eid al Adha.

The agreement to end private sales in these markets is a groundbreaking decision and represents a significant cultural shift for these countries. It must be remembered that we are dealing with complex cultural and religious tradition and that Australia has no jurisdiction in our overseas markets.

Industry is, however, committed to continuing to deliver positive change through these activities and through implementation of the new regulatory framework in 2012.

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What is Eid al Adha?

Eid al Adha is one of the largest annual celebrations on the Muslim calendar. During the festival Muslims are required to sacrifice animals as an act of obedience to Allah. One third of the meat from these animals is eaten by family and relatives, one third is given away to friends and one third is donated to the poor.

The Farmer Review

The Farmer Review and the Australian Government's response were released on October 21.

The Review was designed to develop a new regulatory framework for livestock exports. It outlines 14 recommendations that, once implemented, will deliver the new regulatory framework for the livestock export industry in Australia, on board vessels and in all export markets.

The Australian live export industry welcomes the Australian Government's continued support for the live export trade, and its commitment to securing the trade's long-term sustainability.

Industry is committed to addressing these recommendations, and implementing the new regulatory framework in its export markets within the agreed timeframe, in cooperation with the Australian Government and commercial supply chains.

Industry has implemented this framework in Indonesia and is already working in other key markets to prepare for the roll-out of the new regulatory framework in these markets by end-2012.

The recommendations from the Review closely align with those delivered by the Industry-Government Working Groups for sheep and cattle, confirming industry's commitment to actively drive these reforms.

Telling your story

A new booklet has been developed to help sheepmeat producers who export livestock share information about our industry to the general public and through the media.

'Telling your story' provides some useful background information about the contribution the industry makes to rural and regional communities and the Australian economy as a whole.

Making a personal connection is the most powerful way to promote our industry and counter regular misinformation.

For your copy of the booklet please email sca@sheepmeatcouncil.com.au



More about Eid al Adha and industry's role

Why is it a significant step to end private sales to unknown slaughter points of Australian sheep during Eid al Adha?

During times of normal commercial operation the majority of Australian sheep exported to these markets are processed in approved facilities. However, private sales to unknown slaughter points have occurred particularly during Eid al Adha, where local families and communities buy sheep at the market to take home for sacrifice as part of their religious tradition.

Eid al Adha requires families share meat from the sacrificed animal with their family and friends and poorer members of the community. They must follow strict practices to fulfill their religious obligations.

Industry has developed arrangements with supply chains in Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait to accommodate these religious obligations while assuring animal welfare by processing the animal purchased by a family at an approved facility.

What role does the Australian industry play in implementing changes in the Middle East?

Australia has no jurisdiction to enforce change in our international export markets and the onus is on exporters to ensure the supply chain into which they put sheep meets expectations through these new arrangements.

The Australian Livestock Exporters' Council (ALEC) and SCA, as the policy groups for the live export industry and sheepmeat producers respectively, are providing direction to industry's service providers, LiveCorp and MLA, on how they should direct industry resources to support commercial operators in implementing necessary changes.

In light of the challenges associated with helping markets sustainably change practices and infrastructure, the sheepmeat industry has chosen to focus its support efforts in our three major Middle Eastern markets, including during the forthcoming Eid al Adha period. It will be the responsibility of individual operators in other countries to ensure they meet OIE standards, including during Eid al Adha.

What work has occurred so far?

Industry is working in the marketplace with importers and importing governments to convey the animal welfare expectations of the Australian community. Under SCA's direction, MLA is offering assistance to help commercial operators in Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait understand what the new requirements are and implement the training and resources necessary to handle and process livestock in line with international standards.

While industry works with private sector supply chains on this plan, the Australian Government is working with governments in these key markets on this new approach and incorporating the new arrangements into their meat industry regulatory frameworks.

What has been the response from supply chains and government to the new arrangements?

The response to date to the new arrangements has been positive. Buyers recognise the quality of Australian sheep. They also recognise that maintaining an ongoing trade relationship with Australia will require change to some practices.

However, there will be additional challenges during this year's Eid al Adha because access to Australian sheep in previous years has raised expectations that people can buy our animals for home slaughter, which is no longer the case.

While industry has no jurisdiction in these markets it has actively sought to engage importers and local governments to publicise the change, including advertising, and signage. It has also requested the Australian Government use its influence with its international counterparts to support the new regime.

The changes are a major step for these markets and they have asked for understanding of their religious and cultural obligations and assistance to implement the permanent changes that will be required to meet Australia's new live export regulatory framework next year.