

Media release

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Federal Government ignores science and proposes more research on live export sheep

The Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE) yesterday released their interim decision on the prohibition periods for export of live sheep to the Middle East.

Spokesperson for Vets Against Live Export (VALE) Dr Sue Foster acknowledged that some prohibition periods had been left unchanged or even improved by additional conditions but said, “The shortening of the prohibition period to Qatar (a country known for its extreme temperature and humidity) and the Red Sea will undoubtedly result in worse animal welfare and increased mortality.”

DAWE’s decision was based on risk of ship bridge wet bulb temperatures (WBTs) being above 29°C which ignores the industry’s own research that showed that 27–28°C is the critical WBT.

“WBT is not ambient temperature – it takes into account humidity and temperature. One degree can make a lot of difference to both welfare and mortality, especially when there is no respite from those conditions and the WBT on the decks is 1–3 degrees higher than bridge WBT,” said Dr Foster.

VALE is angered that DAWE intends to contribute funding and work with industry on new research when they have already funded a similar research project using rumen temperature loggers in sheep on ships that was completed in 2017 but has never been published. The government provided 50% of the project which cost at least \$380,000, yet DAWE confirmed with VALE that they have never seen the results of that taxpayer-funded research.

DAWE also confirmed that they did not have access to the research data from 50 sheep transported with rumen loggers on the June 2021 voyage of the MV *Al Kuwait*.

Dr Foster said, “From 2013 to 2021, there has been more than adequate research and data on real-time monitoring of the internal temperatures of exported sheep. If studies showed no heat stress, then the industry would no doubt have published them to silence the critics. Now the Department is proposing additional taxpayer-funded research that will likely also never see the light of day. Meanwhile, sheep will continue to suffer and die.”

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