



MEDIA RELEASE

3000 sheep die from heat stress on live export voyage

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Vets Against Live Export (VALE) is shocked by the latest parliamentary report on livestock mortalities at sea. While the industry continues to claim impeccable welfare standards on ships, the shipboard mortalities from Australia to the Middle East summer in 2016 tell a different story, with death rates exceeding averages and, in one case, reaching catastrophic levels.

VALE spokesperson Dr Sue Foster said, “The report shows that in July 2016, Emanuel Exports Pty Ltd had an extreme mortality event, with 3027 sheep (4.36%) dying on a voyage from Fremantle to the Middle East.

“A reportable mortality incident is 2%. It was no surprise that in a shipboard disaster of this magnitude, heat stress was the major factor.”

“Given that this operator has been exporting to this area for over 20 years they should be very familiar with the prevailing weather conditions,” said Dr Foster.

“Yet the response from the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Resources (DAWR) was to recommend that the exporters investigate the type of weather forecasting information that could be accessed and that industrial fans were to be installed on the vessel.

“The response by the DAWR is both disappointing and totally inadequate given that industrial fans would not mitigate a heat stress disaster in the Middle East. Wet bulb temperatures do not change with a fan.”

The Keniry Enquiry (2004) recommended “exports should be banned in circumstances where the available evidence indicates that the risks of adverse outcomes are predictably high”. It was less than 3 years ago that 4179 sheep (5.53%) died on the *Bader*, and heat crashes on voyages to the Middle East summer have occurred reasonably regularly since being identified by veterinary researcher Andrew Kelly in the 1990s.

Dr Foster added, “The Department’s own records including shipboard performance and high mortality voyage reports all identify the significantly increased risk of transporting animals during the Middle East summer. This is unacceptable – these voyages should cease immediately.”

ENDS.

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