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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Welfare concerns for rejected sheep bound for Pakistan

Yesterday, VALE reported on the saga of sheep from two Australian ships being rejected in the Middle East on the grounds of 'scabby mouth' despite the fact that Australia has Memoranda of Understanding with governments in the Middle East to ensure that this couldn't happen again. One of those ships, the *Al Shuwaikh* is apparently unloading in Kuwait.

VALE has heard unconfirmed reports that the other ship, the *Ocean Drover* has been rerouted to Pakistan with its cargo of rejected sheep. If Pakistan is the new destination, there is the immediate question of whether the exporter has received written confirmation from DAFF that it has accepted a change to all the other necessary documentation, including the export permit.

VALE spokesperson Dr Sue Foster said "We know from the voyage of the *Hereford Express* in November 2008 that such changes are often approved by DAFF on a 'nod and a wink' basis – and we would say this is illegal. It will be interesting to see all the relevant documents relating to this voyage in due course."

VALE's main concern is the standard of animal welfare in Pakistan. Wellard, the exporter, has released a statement saying that sheep were being discharged into an ESCAS compliant supply chain which meets OIE standards, 'ensuring Australian and international animal welfare standards are adhered to'. It seems almost impossible to believe that the assurance protocols designed to ensure animal welfare during unloading, transport and slaughter have been put in place and approved in such a short space of time. This is particularly so given the large number of sheep involved and that the DAFF website indicates that Pakistan has never before imported Australian sheep.

These animals have been on board ship for 33 days, travelling from the southern winter to the extreme heat and humidity of the northern summer, shuttled from port to port. While Wellard has stated that the mortality limit has not been exceeded it must be remembered that only 22,000 sheep have been left on the ship. Deaths in this group of sheep may not have overly influenced the overall mortality which will be a calculated percentage of the initial 70,000-or-so animals. What is clear to VALE is that the much-trumpeted MOU with Bahrain, which was supposed to allow unloading of sheep regardless of their health status, has been completely ineffective.

*ENDS*

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