



M E D I A R E L E A S E

AQIS acts on livestock exporter's licence

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) has decided to prohibit livestock exports by Western Australian-based company Rural Exports and Trading (RETWA) until it completes a comprehensive review of its quality assurance program, the Federal Agriculture Minister, Warren Truss, announced today.

Mr Truss said the decision means RETWA will not be allowed to resume livestock exports until AQIS is satisfied its live export quality assurance program is up to scratch. This action sends a warning to others that the Government is serious about improving the industry's animal welfare record.

"Since last June, four of RETWA's live sheep shipments experienced mortality rates of over 2 per cent, two of over 3 per cent and one of over 6 per cent," he said. "This is clearly unacceptable, and puts at risk Australia's hard-won reputation as a reliable and responsible supplier of healthy livestock."

Mr Truss said RETWA's recent poor record occurred despite AQIS imposing additional requirements on the company and, in some cases, on individual shipments.

"Subsequent investigations by AQIS identified common problems relating to selecting, preparing and transporting the sheep, as well as associated problems with feedlots in eastern Australia," Mr Truss said.

"Following the incidents, RETWA was required to show cause why action should not be taken in relation to its licence under the Australian Meat and Livestock Industry (AMLI) Act. In its response, RETWA proposed a three-month review and upgrade of its processes.

"While this is encouraging, the poor outcomes of the previous four shipments left AQIS with little choice but to put a stop on RETWA's live animal exports until the company provides clear and convincing evidence that it has fixed the problems and successfully tested them in a series of trial shipments.

"This decision, along with the recent cancellation of Sampak Pty Ltd's livestock export licence, effectively puts all Australian exporters on notice."

Mr Truss said Australia's livestock export industry is a significant income earner and important regional employer.

"I am greatly encouraged by its general commitment to improve all aspects of livestock preparation and export operations," he said. "For example, the work currently underway to implement an industry action plan, including a review of all elements of the export chain, not only from Portland in Victoria, but also in South Australia and Western Australia, has my full support.

"Australia has an enviable reputation as a country that honours its obligations to its trading partners - the Coalition Government will not put that at risk."

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