

Live export of ruminants by sea

Position Statement

There is a range of opinions on the live export of ruminants by sea. The New Zealand Veterinary Association opposes the export of any live ruminant by sea, unless its welfare is adequately managed according to the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the 2015 Amendment to the Act that recognises animals as sentient. The registered veterinarians responsible for the ruminants' care must comply with the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians. Consideration should be given to the lifetime of the ruminants, and once the ruminants are outside New Zealand jurisdiction the welfare of the ruminants should meet a minimum of the international standards of the World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH).

Explanation

New Zealand has an international reputation for having high standards of animal welfare. Allowing ruminants to be exported to countries where their welfare will not be protected to a similarly high standard undermines this reputation and is unacceptable. The New Zealand Veterinary Association requires that the welfare of live ruminants exported by sea is managed according to the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the 2015 Amendment to the Act that recognises animals as sentient.

Any ruminant exported from New Zealand must, throughout its lifetime, experience standards of welfare consistent with those expected if that ruminant had remained in New Zealand. Nevertheless, once outside New Zealand, their welfare must meet the minimum international standards set by the World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH), even though these standards may be lower. Under the Animal Welfare (Export of Livestock for Slaughter) Regulations 2016, no cattle, deer, goats, or sheep may be exported for slaughter without the prior approval of the Director-General of the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI).

Adequate safeguards must be put in place to ensure ruminant welfare is protected throughout the lifetime of any ruminant, including transport and slaughter.

Guidelines

1. Ruminants must not be live exported to countries where formal welfare standards for that species do not meet the expectations of WOAH.
2. Ruminants must not be live exported to countries where humane slaughter is not required by local law.
3. All export requirements set by the Ministry for Primary industries must be complied with.
4. For any export of livestock by sea, a suitably selected New Zealand or Australian fully registered veterinarian with livestock experience must accompany the livestock for the entire duration of the sea journey to ensure high levels of welfare are maintained at all times.
5. A ruminant being considered for live export must have a veterinary inspection to assess its individual suitability for the proposed journey, and purpose in the destination country.
6. Export requirements should be set appropriately, and regularly reviewed to ensure any ruminant exported live from New Zealand has, all physical, health, and behavioural needs managed according to the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the 2015 Amendment to the Act that recognises animals as sentient. Consideration should be given to the lifetime of the ruminant and once the ruminants are outside New Zealand jurisdiction the welfare of the ruminants should meet a minimum of the international standards of the World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH).

Name	Approved by Board	Next Review Date <i>Unless circumstances require a lesser period</i>	Public
Live Export of Ruminants by Sea Position Statement	September 2024	September 2027	Yes