

## Live sheep export to Middle East (RIS)

This submission has been prepared in response to the (RIS) on live sheep exports to the Middle East.

Edgar's Mission is a world-renowned not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the protection of farmed animals. Our sanctuary, based in Lancefield, Victoria, offers refuge to orphaned, abandoned, neglected and surrendered farmed animals. Established in 2003, the sanctuary has been directly involved in the rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming of several thousand farmed animals. Throughout this time, Edgar's Mission has had the unique opportunity to gain an understanding of intensive and extensive animal industries and their impacts on animals, the wider community and the environment. Of particular note to this submission Edgar's Mission Founder and Director, Pam Ahern, has been caring for sheep for over 20 years, giving her a unique insight into sheep and their behavior.

### Comment on RIS

Edgar's Mission opposes the live export of sheep to the Middle East. Heat stress is but one of the unacceptable welfare risks animals are subject to. Should it be even possible to mitigate this risk it ignores the other significant risks animals are subject to as part of the live sheep trade. These include; those meet during long-distance transport, in feedlots, and in foreign ports, holding and slaughtering facilities.

### Emotionally complex

Sheep are emotionally complex animals; science is now only beginning to catch up with not only their intelligence but their ability to suffer under an array of farming, transport and slaughtering conditions.

In December of 1965, a group of scientists and veterinarians came together to investigate animal welfare in intensive livestock systems in the UK. Borne out of this was the *Brambell Report*, which included the "five freedoms". Whilst our understanding of farmed animals has advanced in leaps and bounds, these five principles give a meaningful, albeit generalised yardstick to measure the essential needs of animals kept in domestic settings. These are:

- 1. Freedom from hunger and thirst** - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- 2. Freedom from discomfort** - by providing an appropriate environment, including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- 3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease** - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- 4. Freedom to express normal behaviour** - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and the company of the animal's own kind.
- 5. Freedom from fear and distress** - by ensuring conditions and treatment that avoid mental suffering.

Confining large numbers of traditionally free-roaming animals under the intensive conditions of live export either compromises or severely inhibits every one of these above freedoms to some extent. Science, more than ever, is now showing farmed animals to be emotionally complex beings—making it incongruous that a society as advanced as ours would consider it legally or morally acceptable to cram sheep into sea vessels and send them across the seas to foreign countries and climates.

### **Conclusion**

As a respected organisation with a strong tradition in promoting responsible animal stewardship, Edgar's Mission recognises the mounting body of evidence revealing the inherent deleterious nature of live export. Notably, it's inability to meet the requirements, or community expectations, of good animal welfare. It is for these reasons we firmly believe that ending the live sheep trade is the only option.

Submission prepared by Pam Ahern, Director, Edgar's Mission Inc