



<b>EXPORT ADVISORY NOTICE – 2016-08</b>		<b>18 April 2016</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Amendments to ESCAS animal welfare audit standards and checklist</b>	
<b>Species:</b>	<b>Feeder and slaughter cattle, buffalo, sheep and goats</b>	
<b>Country:</b>	<b>All export destinations</b>	
<b>For information:</b>	<b>[1] Livestock exporters [2] Australian Livestock Exporters Council, LiveCorp, Meat and Livestock Australia [3] Department Officers</b>	

## **P u r p o s e**

This Export Advisory Notice is to notify exporters of amendments to the animal welfare standards and checklist documents for use by independent auditors during audits of Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) supply chains.

## **I s s u e**

Exporters are required to ensure independent audits are conducted for all facilities in their ESCAS supply chains in importing countries to provide assurance that livestock control, traceability and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) animal welfare recommendations are being met.

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture of Water Resources (the department) has made some technical amendments to the ESCAS animal welfare standards and checklist that were released in 2015. The changes are to clarify expectations and better recognise that different animal restraint and slaughter methods are used in various importing countries. The standards remain consistent with the OIE code.

## **I n s t r u c t i o n s**

Technical changes have been made to the documents below:

- Updated ESCAS animal welfare standards (**Attachment B**)
- Guidance to auditors on conducting animal welfare audits (**Attachment C**)
- Template for use during the audit (**Attachment D**)
- Updated summary audit report template (**Attachment E**).

Exporters should use these updated documents for independent audits of animal welfare in ESCAS supply chains. A list of the ESCAS animal welfare standards is provided in **Attachment A**.

The following changes have been made to the documents:

Standard 15 (The method of restraint employed must be designed and operated effectively for the size and class of livestock):

The standard remains the same but 'Evidence of compliance point 10' has been revised to remove the time measurement (five seconds) for restraint boxes that fully invert the animal. The OIE requirements are to keep restraint as brief as possible, and to have proper design and operation of slaughter boxes.

The wording has been amended to:

For restraint boxes that fully invert the animal:

- the head must be fully restrained with the neck extended prior to inversion; and
- the inversion must proceed smoothly and without interruption to minimise the period of restraint; and
- slaughter must occur as soon as the animal is fully inverted.

Standard 24 (The head must be restrained in a manner which facilitates slaughter and for as short a time as possible):

The standard has been revised to clarify the time measurement (10 seconds) for the period between restraint and slaughter. The OIE requirement is to keep restraint as brief as possible prior to slaughter, including in inversion slaughter boxes.

The wording has been amended to:

- For sheep or goats, slaughter occurs within 10 seconds of the head restraint process (manual restraint) or from when the box is in the final resting position (slaughter boxes).
- For cattle or buffalo, slaughter occurs within 10 seconds from when the slaughter box is in the final resting position.

As before, head restraint is timed from completion of the head restraint process (manual restraint) or from when the box is in the final resting position (slaughter boxes). After slaughter, the period of restraint is sufficient to prevent the wound edges touching and to check that the animal is unconscious (Standards 20 and 25).

Standard 29: Each facility in the ESCAS supply chain must have Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to ensure that facility staff work in accordance with the ESCAS animal welfare standards.

This requirement is already in the auditor guidance, and has been added to the standards to remove any ambiguity about facility requirements. The SOPs should be consistent with the ESCAS animal welfare standards (attached to this Export Advisory Notice).

## **Background**

To comply with ESCAS requirements, exporters must demonstrate that they have a supply chain assurance system that meets OIE guidelines for animal welfare. The exporter's ESCAS assurance system must also effectively control movement of individual livestock within the supply chain, be able to trace livestock through to and including slaughter, and be independently verified and audited against these requirements.

Independent audits must be conducted according to the facility risk rating determined by the department, as outlined in Export Advisory Notice (EAN) 2015-06. The exporter must submit the completed summary audit report to the department following each audit. The exporter must keep all audit reports and provide these to the department if requested.

The department provided updated animal welfare standards, guidance and a checklist for auditors in EAN 2015-05. These documents, and the amendments, were developed in consultation between industry and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture of Water Resources (the department). Exporters and auditors should refer to EAN 2015-05 for further information on audit requirements [<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/export/controlled-goods/live-animals/advisory-notices/2015>].

The ESCAS animal welfare audit documents form a complementary package and should be read and used together. Consistent with the OIE recommendations, the standards focus on animal welfare outcomes. The guidance provides additional information to assist delivery – and audit – of the standards.

The standards are consistent with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health code for improvement of animal health and welfare (2014) ([www.oie.int/en/international-standard-setting/terrestrial-code/access-online/](http://www.oie.int/en/international-standard-setting/terrestrial-code/access-online/)).

The standards document is applicable for all livestock (cattle, buffalo, sheep and goats) exported for feeder or slaughter purposes. It includes general guidance to auditors regarding standards for livestock welfare, and details of animal welfare outcomes during handling of livestock, discharge, land transport, feedlots/holding facilities, abattoir large and slaughter with and without stunning. The standards also include criteria for assessing animal restraint boxes.

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