

Livestock supply chains well prepared for busy festival period

AUSTRALIAN Livestock Exporters' Council Chairman, Hon Simon Crean, says months of collaborative planning and preparation by industry in the lead-up to busy religious festivals in key Muslim markets reflects Australia's long-term commitment to a sustainable livestock export trade.

Mr Crean said the annual spike in demand for live animals for the *Festival of the Sacrifice*, due on September 1, presented challenges for livestock exporters and their importing customers, but that in-market preparation had boosted the industry's confidence that the 2017 festival would deliver further progress in the management of Australian livestock during the annual celebrations.

Mr Crean said significant year-on-year improvements in the handling and processing of Australian livestock were facilitated by long-term planning by Australian exporters, in collaboration with in-market supply chain partners.

"Not only does the Festival of the Sacrifice (known as *Eid al-Adha* in the Middle East and *Korban* in South East Asia) place considerable pressure on Australia's world-leading control and traceability livestock systems, it also places increased attention of the integrity of our supply chains," Mr Crean said.

"Our industry welcomes that scrutiny because we are proud of the continuous improvements we're achieving and we do not shy away from the challenges and risks inherent during these busy periods."

Mr Crean said poor welfare outcomes were never acceptable and that ALEC believed the relevant powers regulating livestock export supply chains should be exercised in response to any deliberate breaches.

"Our industry's objective is to continue to work with our international customers to identify and control any risks in the supply chain, and respond promptly whenever the welfare of Australian livestock is threatened," Mr Crean said.

"Despite our best efforts, we accept that no system is 100 per cent fail-safe and that the biggest risk to the welfare of Australian livestock is leakage from approved supply chains.

“Exporters have already been pro-active in reporting and rectifying supply chain leakages in-market in recent weeks and will continue to monitor local markets and abattoirs for any non-compliance.”

Mr Crean said the 2017 festival period would be underpinned by joint initiatives between exporters and their customers, including:

- Streamlined supply chains, including pre-sold carcass systems, in markets such as Qatar and Kuwait
- Greater in-market uptake of carcass-only sales and support for charity slaughter initiatives
- Increased promotion to customers of electronic ticketing and online pre-purchasing of carcasses
- Consignment of smaller volumes in some supply chains to reduce the risk of over-supply

Under Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) requirements, Australian livestock must not be sold outside of approved supply chains and cannot be purchased for home slaughter or for slaughter at facilities which do not meet the international animal welfare standards embedded in ESCAS.

Mr Crean said his supply chain tour of Arabian Gulf markets last year gave him an acute awareness of the significant progress achieved in the Middle East in the ESCAS era and that ALEC had been back in-market in recent weeks with producer representatives to follow-up on further progress over the past 12 months.

“I have seen first-hand the genuine commitment to continuous improvement from importers and abattoir operators,” he said.

“Greater vertical integration in the supply chain, the growth of closed-loop feedlot and abattoir facilities and ticket sale systems which remove interaction between livestock and customers are all very positive initiatives.

“Producers and exporters are rightfully proud of the world-leading role we are playing in the global protein supply chain, especially during culturally significant periods such as the Festival of the Sacrifice.

“This is a very special time for Muslim communities and on behalf of all Australian livestock exporters, I extend my very best wishes to all of our customers and their families for the coming days.”

ALEC Media Contact: Tom Dawkins via 0476 844 886 or media@livexcouncil.com.au

Further information:

Australia is one of 130 livestock exporting nations worldwide and exports approximately 10 per cent of the total number of live sheep traded globally. Australian livestock exporters will only supply a smaller relative percentage of the overall numbers of sheep during the festival period in the Middle East, with significant local supplies and large volumes of imported livestock from Africa and Europe.

As trade volumes increased ahead of the high-demand festival period, Australia exported its one millionth live sheep for 2017 earlier in August, more than three-quarters of which departed from Fremantle. Kuwait and Qatar have imported more than 330,000 thousand head each, with much of the balance going to other markets in the Middle East.

Malaysia is a smaller market, with the established live goat trade slowing to a trickle due to high farm-gate prices in Australia and with about 60,000 sheep exported there this year. Supply chains in Malaysia, the majority of which are

supplied via regular air-freight consignments from Perth and Adelaide, have also been the focus on significant industry preparation and planning in recent months. Nonetheless, the higher volumes and increased demand mean risks are inherent.

Note: The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources is responsible for regulating and controlling the livestock export trade. Information about the laws and regulations governing the trade is available online at www.agriculture.gov.au

