

# LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS BY SEA



**BANNED**  
from 2028



A GROUNDBREAKING LAW PASSED THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT ON 1 JULY 2024 PROHIBITING LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS BY SEA FROM 1 MAY 2028.

This fact sheet looks at how the new law works and the long legal campaign to bring it about.

## THE NEW LAW

The *Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Act 2024* amends the *Export Control Act 2020* (Cth) (“the Act”) which is administered by the Australian Government.[1]

It introduces the concept of ‘**permanently prohibited exports**’ which only includes sheep exported from Australia by sea on and after **1 May 2028** (new section 23A).

Importantly, exporters will be unable to apply for an exemption from the new ban. Any person will be liable for a **criminal offence** or **civil penalty** if they export live sheep by sea from 1 May 2028.

## THE LIVE SHEEP EXPORT TRADE

Currently it is legal to export live sheep from Australia either by sea or air. In 2022–23, the estimated value of Australia’s sheep meat exports was \$4.5 billion. The export of live sheep by sea made up less than 2% of this trade. Most of Australia’s live sheep exports are to Middle Eastern countries. Despite reported efforts by the industry to address concerns, the **extreme heat and cramped conditions** during the long sea journeys on export vessels operated by Australian companies continue to pose a significant risk to animal welfare.

## THE REFORM

Currently the Act prohibits ‘absolutely’ the export of only one type of good, which is a plant resembling red lentils known as ‘split vetch’. This existing ban focuses on the type of goods and bans their export by any means. The new section focuses on the means of exporting, and permanently bans the export by sea of live sheep from 1 May 2028.

This is **historic law reform** for animals, banning an entire practice that history has shown time and again inflicts unjustifiable harm on sentient animals.

## THE DEBATE

Animal advocates wanted live sheep exports to stop sooner than 2028 and for all modes of transport (eg sea and air). Farmers urged the Government to keep the trade going, arguing a ban would hurt local jobs and the Australian economy. In the wider community, research commissioned by the Australian Department of Agriculture showed that 95% of Australians view farmed animal welfare to be a concern, and 91% want to see reform to address these concerns.[2]

[1] <https://tinyurl.com/mssp9w3w4>

[2] Futureye, *Australia’s Shifting Mindset on Farm Animal Welfare* (2018)

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## HOW LONG IT TOOK TO CHANGE THE LAW



1985

### THE SENATE QUESTIONS THE TRADE...

Senate Select Committee on export of live sheep from Australia finds that if a decision on the future of the live sheep trade were made on animal welfare grounds alone, 'there is enough evidence to stop the trade'.

2011

Adam Bandt (Australian Greens) introduces the **Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011** in the Australian House of Representatives, to prohibit absolutely with immediate effect the export of live farmed animals for slaughter. The Bill does not pass.

Independent Senator Nick Xenophon introduces the **Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011** in the Australian Senate, seeking to prohibit the export of farmed animals from 1 July 2014. The Bill lapses.

2017

Senator Lee Rhiannon (the Australian Greens) introduces the **Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2017** to the Australian Senate to prohibit the export of live animals for slaughter with immediate effect. The Bill lapses.

2018

Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Joel Fitzgibbon, announces that, if elected, a Labor Government would develop a transition plan to phase out live sheep export.

Liberal MP Sussan Ley introduces the **Live Sheep Long Haul Export Prohibition Bill 2018** in the Australian House of Representatives as a private member's Bill to phase out live sheep exports by sea over 5 years. The Bill lapses.

Senators Lee Rhiannon (Australian Greens) and Derryn Hinch (Justice Party) introduce the **Animal Export Legislation Amendment (Ending Long-haul Live Sheep Exports) Bill 2018** in the Australian Senate to phase out live sheep exports by sea over 5 years. The Bill lapses.

2024

On 30 May 2024 the Australian Labor Party delivers on its election promises to end live sheep exports by sea by introducing the **Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024** in the Australian House of Representatives. The Bill passes both houses of Parliament on 1 July 2024 and receives the Governor-General's assent on 9 July 2024. The Act commences the day after assent.

2028

...LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS BY SEA TO END.