Eid al-Adha
Live Export Investigations
2016
What is ESCAS?

The Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System is a system of regulation introduced after Animals Australia’s investigation in Indonesia in 2011. ESCAS is a traceability system that requires all exported animals to be sent only to Australian-approved feedlots and abattoirs, and that animals be handled and slaughtered in line with OIE (World Organisation of Animal Health) standards.¹

Adherence to ESCAS is a condition of an exporter’s licence.

Animals Australia’s ongoing investigations since 2011 have shown recurring breaches of ESCAS, with horrific consequences for animals. Despite some export companies being repeat offenders, not one exporter has had their licence suspended or faced prosecution.

The Festival of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha) is high-risk period for Australian exported animals when the likelihood of private sales, backyard or street slaughter and car boot transport increases.

Despite these practices now being prohibited under Australian regulations, every year since ESCAS was introduced, evidence has shown Australian animals continuing to be subjected to brutal handling, slaughter and transport during Eid al-Adha.

ESCAS breaches, brutality widespread during 2016 Festival of Sacrifice

Animals Australia investigators have again uncovered widespread breaches of live export regulations during Eid al-Adha. Comprehensive legal complaints have been lodged with the Department of Agriculture (DA). DA was immediately notified of breaches whilst investigators were still in the field. Evidence provided to DA filmed in markets and abattoirs in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Oman and Malaysia shows Australian sheep and goats:

- Trussed and shoved into car boots while alive in extreme heat (35 degrees Celsius and above)
- Beaten, thrown and dragged
- Crudely slaughtered on cement slabs
- Dragged while still alive after having their throats cut while fully conscious
- Left to die slowly with their throats slashed open
- Slaughtered in non-ESCAS approved abattoirs
- Slaughtered in approved abattoirs by methods that breach ESCAS rules
- Sold in non-approved marketplaces – some of which have been the subject of numerous complaints since the ESCAS was introduced

Sheep were identified as Australian by ear tags, breed and mulesing scarring. In some cases, the names of the Australian properties they came from were discernible on ear tags. Animals Australia has written to these producers to advise them that their sheep were subjected to abuse and involved in breaches of ESCAS.

¹These standards still allow for animals to be slaughtered while fully conscious and for ‘full inversion’ slaughter, where animals are placed in a machine that suspends them upside down while they are killed.
First extensive Malaysia investigation reveals widespread abuses

This was the first significant investigation that Animals Australia had conducted in Malaysia. Evidence gathered graphically reveals that ESCAS requirements were being blatantly ignored – despite the presence of Meat & Livestock Australia personnel and exporter representatives in the country. MLA personnel were specifically moved from other locations to Malaysia on hearing that Animals Australia investigators were in country. Their failure to prevent and report breaches again raises questions as to whether MLA is protecting export companies interests over sheep and cattle producers.

Breaches of Australian live export regulations, involving cattle, sheep and goats were recorded at 14 separate locations outside of Kuala Lumpur. The terrible handling and slaughter of sheep and goats was documented in at least three facilities which are ESCAS-approved.

In both the ESCAS-approved facilities and the others, sheep and goats were incompetently restrained while their throats were cut multiple times, and they were then dragged whilst still conscious. Footage shows abattoir workers failing to check if animals were dead before beginning to butcher them.

Years of ‘ongoing, deliberate disregard’ for Australian regulations in the UAE

The Dubai Livestock Market is one of the worst in the Middle East for treatment of Australian animals. Animals Australia first brought this to the Government’s attention in 2007.

Video from this year’s investigation shows that neither the implementation of ESCAS nor regulatory action taken by the Department of Agriculture (DA) in response to Animals Australia’s complaints have succeeded in halting or reducing abuses at this location.

The footage shows several unapproved merchants with pens full of Australian sheep openly selling to individual buyers to kill at home instead of at an approved abattoir as required by ESCAS standards. One unapproved merchant has even named his business ‘Australian Lamb’, and advertises this on a permanent billboard above the sheep pens.

Dubai Livestock Market covers many hectares and thousands of sales occur there over Eid. Buyers often have to park their vehicles up to a kilometre away from the market, then drag sheep by the leg, horns, wool or with ropes around their throats all the way to their cars in the heat.

1,000 sheep at Lebanon facility that was reported in 2013

In 2013, Animals Australia discovered Australian sheep illegally hidden at ‘Rassem Trading Company’ on the second floor of a converted carpark building in Lebanon.

In 2016, ESCAS breaches were documented at the exact same premises.

A shipment of approximately 12,000 sheep were unloaded in Beirut in early June 2016 from the MV Nada vessel from Perth-based company Fares Rural Exports. This was the first approved shipment of Australian sheep into Lebanon since 2003. The sheep found there in 2013 had been illegally on-sold from Jordan.
Animals Australia’s 2016 investigation found at least 1,000 sheep at Rassem Trading Company’s premises and a further 1,000 at another unapproved facility, the Dahrouj Fanar Slaughterhouse.

At the Dahrouj Fanar Slaughterhouse, sheep were dragged down the stairs from the fourth story of a building to the slaughter area, where their throats were cut open over a blood drain. The video clearly shows employees removing the animals’ ear tags (a routine practice which prevents animals being traced back to the exporter legally responsible).

**Fifth consecutive year of illegal sales in Kuwait**

Every year since ESCAS was introduced, Animals Australia has documented the blatant, illegal sale of Australian sheep at the notoriously cruel Al Rai livestock market. 2016 was no different.

The brutal treatment of Australian sheep documented at the Al Rai Livestock Market in 2010 was one of the compelling reasons for ESCAS to be introduced.

Since the inception of ESCAS, Al Rai has been the subject of eight complaints to the Department of Agriculture. All sellers have been reported in previous complaints to the Department on a number of occasions and are well-known and established livestock merchants permanently based in the Al Rai market.

During the Eid in 2016, hundreds of Australian sheep were again being offered for sale and slaughter at this market. The evidence also shows Australian sheep being trussed and dragged/wheelbarrowed to awaiting car boots.

Ongoing non-compliance in Kuwait is a clear example of the failings of ESCAS. There are only two exporters to Kuwait and both have been sanctioned for breaches in the past – yet despite recurring non-compliance resulting in horrific cruelty to thousands of animals, both exporters continue to be granted export permits to the country.

**Sheep stuffed in car boots in Oman – again**

In Oman, footage shows pens full of Australian sheep awaiting sale to individual buyers who drag them to their cars by the ears and legs. This is in breach of ESCAS regulations that require sheep to be handled only at approved abattoirs.

The video also shows that the animals are suffering heat stress as they lie trussed in car boots. Meteorological data show that the temperature at those locations was around 35 degrees Celsius on the days the video was shot.

Oman was also the scene of extensive live export breaches during the Eid in 2015.
ESCAS standards ignored in approved facilities

Animals Australia has submitted five extensive legal complaints to the Department of Agriculture detailing the breaches that were documented and providing video evidence.

The complaints are in relation to the following ESCAS Standards relating to the Handling of Livestock (the numbers correspond to the attached document, ESCAS ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARD, available for download here: http://www.agriculture.gov.au/export/controlled-goods/live-animals/advisory-notices/2015/2015-05):

ESCAS Standard No.1: Handling and movement of livestock must be carried out calmly and effectively, avoiding harm, distress or injury.

ESCAS Standard No 2: Livestock must not be subjected to procedures that cause pain and suffering.

ESCAS Standard No. 22: The throat must be cut using a single (blade does not leave the wound until act of slaughter completed), deep, uninterrupted fast stroke of the knife.

ESCAS Standard No. 24: The head must be restrained in a manner which facilitates slaughter and for as short a time as possible, in no case for longer than 10 seconds.

ESCAS Standard No. 25: The head of the animal must be kept in extension to prevent the edges of the wounds touching until the animal is unconscious.

ESCAS Standard No. 26: Animals must not be hoisted, have water thrown on them or be otherwise disturbed prior to confirmed unconsciousness

ESCAS Standard No. 27: Death must be assured before performing carcass dressing or cutting procedures.

Animals Australia’s evidence shows that these regulations are not complied with even in

*Figure 1: Still image from Animals Australia footage captured at Farwaniya Abattoir during Eid al-Adha 2016.*
approved abattoirs, let alone in the many non-approved facilities where they found Australian animals.

For example, ample footage from the Farwaniya Abattoir in Kuwait shows slaughterhouse staff hacking at sheep’s throats numerous times per animal (in breach of ESCAS Standard No. 22, above), then shoving them down along a conveyor table while they are still very obviously alive (in breach of ESCAS Standard No. 26).

In one instance – pictured above – a sheep tries to get up after lying with his throat open for the time it takes to slaughter two others.

The Farwaniya Abattoir has been the subject of eight previous complaints since the inception of ESCAS 2014. In 2015, DA recorded a critical non-compliance against the abattoir, but the video evidence from 2016 shows methods have not changed at the facility.

All countries visited by Animals Australia’s investigators in 2016 have been reported for ESCAS breaches in the past, with some complaints involving repeat offending companies. Animals Australia has requested that the Department of Agriculture take urgent and meaningful action given it is clear that previous sanctions have not been enough to motivate compliance.

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