



**A national guide to the  
selection of animals fit  
to transport  
Revised edition 2012**

# Is it fit to load?

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Australian Livestock Exporters Council (ALEC)  
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Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC)  
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Published by Meat & Livestock  
Australia Limited  
ABN: 39 081 678 364  
Printed April 2012

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ISBN: 9781741918885

# Animal welfare legislation and livestock transport



The Australian Animal Welfare Standards for the Land Transport of Livestock (the Standards) define specific requirements in relation to livestock transport in Australia. The Standards are enforceable. It is an offence to load and transport an animal in a way that causes, or is likely to cause, it unnecessary harm.

These Standards replace the individual state/territory livestock transport provisions of the Australian model codes of practice for the welfare of animals, so there are now the same rules nationwide for livestock transport.

This *Is it fit to load* guide will help producers, agents, buyers, transporters meet their legal obligations under the new Standards.

## About this guide

This guide has been developed to help you decide if an animal is fit to be loaded for transport by road or rail to any destination within Australia. An animal is **not fit for the journey** if it:

- is not strong enough to undertake the journey
- cannot walk normally, bearing weight on all legs
- is severely emaciated or visibly dehydrated
- is suffering from severe visible distress or injury
- is in a condition that could cause it increased pain or distress during transport
- is blind in both eyes
- is in late pregnancy\*

Some examples of animals that are unfit to transport are shown on pages 6-11

\* see page 12 for more information

**If in doubt - leave it out!**

# Preparing livestock for transport

Preparing livestock for transport correctly is a vital element of any journey. Well-prepared stock travel better, are less stressed and associated animal welfare issues are avoided.

Steps for preparing livestock for transport:

- plan the journey including rest stops and inspections
- know who to contact in case of an emergency
- make sure the facilities including yards, races, loading ramps and vehicles are well constructed and will not injure livestock
- handle livestock quietly and with minimum force – stress is cumulative
- segregate animals appropriately (e.g. horned animals, mothers with young, etc.)
- rest recently mustered livestock prior to loading

**It is the responsibility of the person in charge to ensure that animals are prepared correctly and will cope well with the entire journey.**

# Preparing livestock for transport

## - feed and water

**Maximum time off water.** The Standards determine the maximum period of time that each species can be held off water during transport. See the table overleaf for more information. This period includes mustering and any time off water in yards, as well as the journey itself. But, these are *maximum* limits - certain classes of animals, such as pregnant or young animals, or conditions such as hot dry weather could mean animals need even more regular access to water.

**Journey log.** Transporters, drivers and agents should always seek information about how long animals have been off feed and water before loading. If it is likely that the journey will take more than 24 hours, then the date and time when animals last had access to water and when they were last inspected must be recorded by the person in charge. Written information about who to contact in an emergency must also be provided.

**Feed and water during curfews.** Dry feed such as hay but not green feed can be offered prior to loading even if water has been withheld. While food and/or water is on offer, make sure that there is enough space for every animal to access it, as shy feeders become an issue when space is limited. Consider giving electrolytes to animals during the preparation period as it may help prevent physical stress during a long journey.

## Feed and water curfews

Species	Class of animal	Max. time off water	Required spelling period <sup>†</sup>
Cattle	Cattle over 6 months old	48 hours	36 hours
	Calves 30 days to 6 month old	24 hours	12 hours
	Lactating cows with calves at foot	24 hours	12 hours
	Cows known to be more than 6 months pregnant, excluding the last 4 weeks	24 hours	12 hours
	Calves 5 - 30 days old travelling without mothers (12 hours max. journey)	18 hours	
Sheep	Sheep over 4 months old	48 hours	36 hours
	Lambs under 4 months	28 hours	12 hours
	Ewes known to be more than 14 weeks pregnant, excluding the last 2 weeks	24 hours	12 hours
Goats	Goats over 6 months old	48 hours	36 hours
	Kids under 6 months	28 hours	12 hours
	Goats known to be more than 14 weeks pregnant, excluding the last 2 weeks	24 hours	12 hours
Pigs	Pigs	24 hours	12 hours
	Lactating sows and piglets	12 hours	12 hours
	Weaners	12 hours	12 hours

<sup>†</sup> the period of time that stock must rest and have access to food and water when the maximum time off water has been reached

Some examples of animals that are unfit to load:

# Lameness

Unable to walk normally, not bearing weight on all legs



*Recent fracture*



*Old fracture*



*Recent injury*



*Deformity*



*Abscess*



*Joint infection*

The responsibility not to cause unnecessary harm still rests with the person in charge of the animal



Some examples of animals that are unfit to load:

## **Severely emaciated or visibly dehydrated**



The responsibility not to cause unnecessary harm still rests with the person in charge of the animal

Some examples of animals that are unfit to load:

## **Visible signs of severe injury or distress**

*Swollen  
pizzle*



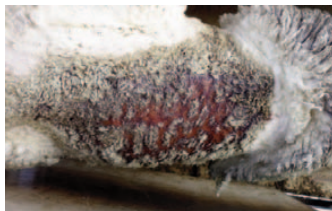
*Exhaustion*



*Panting*



*Fly strike*



The responsibility not to cause unnecessary harm still rests with the person in charge of the animal

Some examples of animals that are unfit to load:

**Likely to cause increased pain or distress during transport**



*Ingrown horn*



*Cancer: vulva*



*Cancer: udder*



*Cancer: ear*



*Swollen testicles*



*Advanced mastitis*

The responsibility not to cause unnecessary harm still rests with the person in charge of the animal

Some examples of animals that are unfit to load:

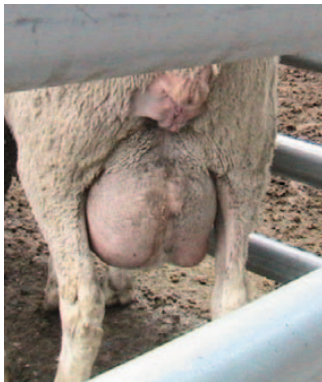
# Blindness in both eyes



The responsibility not to cause unnecessary harm still rests with the person in charge of the animal

Some examples of animals that are unfit to load:

# Late pregnancy\*



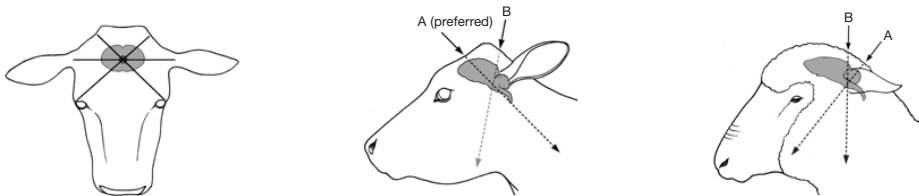
\* Refer to the Standards to determine limits for late pregnancy. Export Standards have certification requirements for pregnancy status.

The responsibility not to cause unnecessary harm still rests with the person in charge of the animal

# What to do if an animal is unfit to load

If you identify an animal which meets any of the criteria on page two, then you must not transport it. You can:

- treat the animal and transport when recovered and fit to load
- humanely destroy the animal, or
- consult a veterinary surgeon and then transport only under veterinary advice



Humane destruction of cattle using a firearm or captive bolt. (A) indicates the frontal method and (B) indicates the poll method which may be used in an emergency if the frontal position is unavailable.

Humane destruction of sheep using a firearm or captive bolt. (A) indicates the poll method which is the only one suitable for sheep with horns, (B) indicates the straight down or crown method.

Make sure the animal is dead before you leave it. If in doubt re-shoot. Bleeding out is used to ensure the death of an unconscious but still living animal.

# For more information

*The Australian Animal Welfare Standards for the Land Transport of Livestock:*

[www.livestockwelfarestandards.net.au](http://www.livestockwelfarestandards.net.au)

The Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock:

[www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/export-trade](http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/export-trade)

Or, contact the department of primary industries in your state/territory:

ACT: Parks, Conservation and Lands

**132 281**

NSW: Department of Primary Industries

**1800 808 095**

NT: Department of Resources – Primary Industry

**1300 720 386**

QLD: Queensland Government

**13 25 23**

SA: Primary Industries and Regions South Australia

**08 8207 7900**

TAS: Department of Primary Industries, Parks Water and Environment

**1300 368 550**

VIC: Department of Primary Industries

**136 186**

WA: Department of Agriculture and Food

**08 9366 2311**

For information about Meat & Livestock Australia's animal health and welfare program, visit [www.mla.com.au](http://www.mla.com.au).



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