

RSPCA Australia Inc.

EMBARGOED

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**FAIR GO FOR FARM ANIMALS**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**HOW CAN THEY SAY THEY CARE?**

**LIVE TRADE WITH EGYPT MUST END NOW: RSPCA**

The Australian Government and the live export industry got it wrong – international government agreements have failed and the only way to ensure more Australian animals don't suffer from the same, deeply-entrenched cruelty is to end the live animal trade with Egypt immediately.

An angry RSPCA Victoria President Dr Hugh Wirth said he was shocked but not surprised by the latest footage, showing brutal cruelty in the post-arrival handling and slaughter of the first shipment of sheep from Australia to Egypt since the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in October 2006.

“The Australian Government and live export industry claim to care about animal welfare, but continuing to send our animals to suffer such cruelty and abuse so we can ‘educate’ the perpetrators is like Australia trying to teach the Japanese how to better kill whales,” said Dr Wirth.

“Any compassionate Australian who sees this footage, and sees our Australian animals being treated so violently, will agree these ingrained practices are so far from what we would consider acceptable that the only solution is to end the live trade with Egypt immediately,” he said.

Dr Wirth also said that following the public airing of such footage, a lack of action on ending the trade will be seen internationally as tacit agreement and acceptance by Australia to such treatment of its animals.

“The Australian Government and the live export industry already know these practices have been going on for decades, and it's unmistakably clear their efforts to improve animal welfare standards have been wholly unsuccessful,” he said.

“Claiming to care about animal welfare and criticising animal welfare standards in other countries is pure hypocrisy if Australia is seen to be not only allowing, but *participating* in unacceptably cruel practices to make more money through an unnecessary live export trade,” said Dr Wirth.

“The live trade with Egypt must end now, and the Australia Government must, as an absolute priority, invest in the infrastructure required to expand the chilled and frozen meat trade so it can replace live animal exports as soon as possible,” said Dr Wirth.

The MOU, which required Egypt to implement measures consistent with international animal welfare standards established by the World Animal Health Organisation (OIE), was developed as a last ditch effort by government and industry to improve the handling of exported Australian animals after trade with Egypt was suspended following the airing of similar footage last year.

Egypt represents a very small proportion of the live export market – just over 1% of annual total cattle exports and around 4% of annual total sheep exports before the suspension.

The sheep shown in the December 2006 footage were sent to Egypt for the *Eid-Al-Adha*, or Festival of Sacrifice, on the morning of which the streets of Cairo are said to literally ‘flow with blood’.

The footage shows appalling and unjustifiable practices by animal handlers and slaughtermen, with exhausted and distressed animals being thrown or dropped off vehicles in busy traffic and dragged along the ground, sheep roughly tied onto roof racks and crammed into car boots, and animals with their legs bound and their throats then roughly sawn open with blunt knives in front of other waiting animals.

For more information or to view the footage, visit [www.rspca.org.au](http://www.rspca.org.au).

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