

media release

RSPCA SLAMS DECISION TO RELOAD STRANDED SHEEP

Plans to reload Adelaide's stranded sheep today for export to the Middle East show callous disregard for the welfare of the animals, said RSPCA Australia CEO Heather Neil this morning.

"The RSPCA has grave concerns that these sheep will be at greater risk on this sea journey due to the additional stress and trauma of the past few weeks.

"We have no doubt caring Australians will be as disappointed as the RSPCA that these sheep were not afforded a last minute reprieve. They should have been processed here in Australia and the meat exported.

"The stress of transport begins on day one and these sheep have been in transit for a month. They now face another three weeks at sea heading to temperatures in the Middle East of close to 40 degrees.

"There are many unknowns in this situation because the offloading of these animals from the live export vessel, the Al Messilah, was an Australian first.

"What we do know is that sheep die on every ship that leaves Australia. They die from failing to eat, from illness and injury and particularly at this time of year, they succumb to heat stress.

"We have sought information from AQIS as to what requirements will be put on the exporter to help manage these additional risks but AQIS has so far failed to provide us with this information.

"This incident provided government and industry with an opportunity to prove to the Australian public that animal welfare is indeed the priority it professes it to be.

"Regardless, we know that the vast majority of these sheep will be slaughtered while fully conscious in the Middle East. We also have no information as to what system has been put in place to stop private sale and slaughter to prevent the brutal treatment inflicted on Australian sheep exposed during last year's Festival of Sacrifice."

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