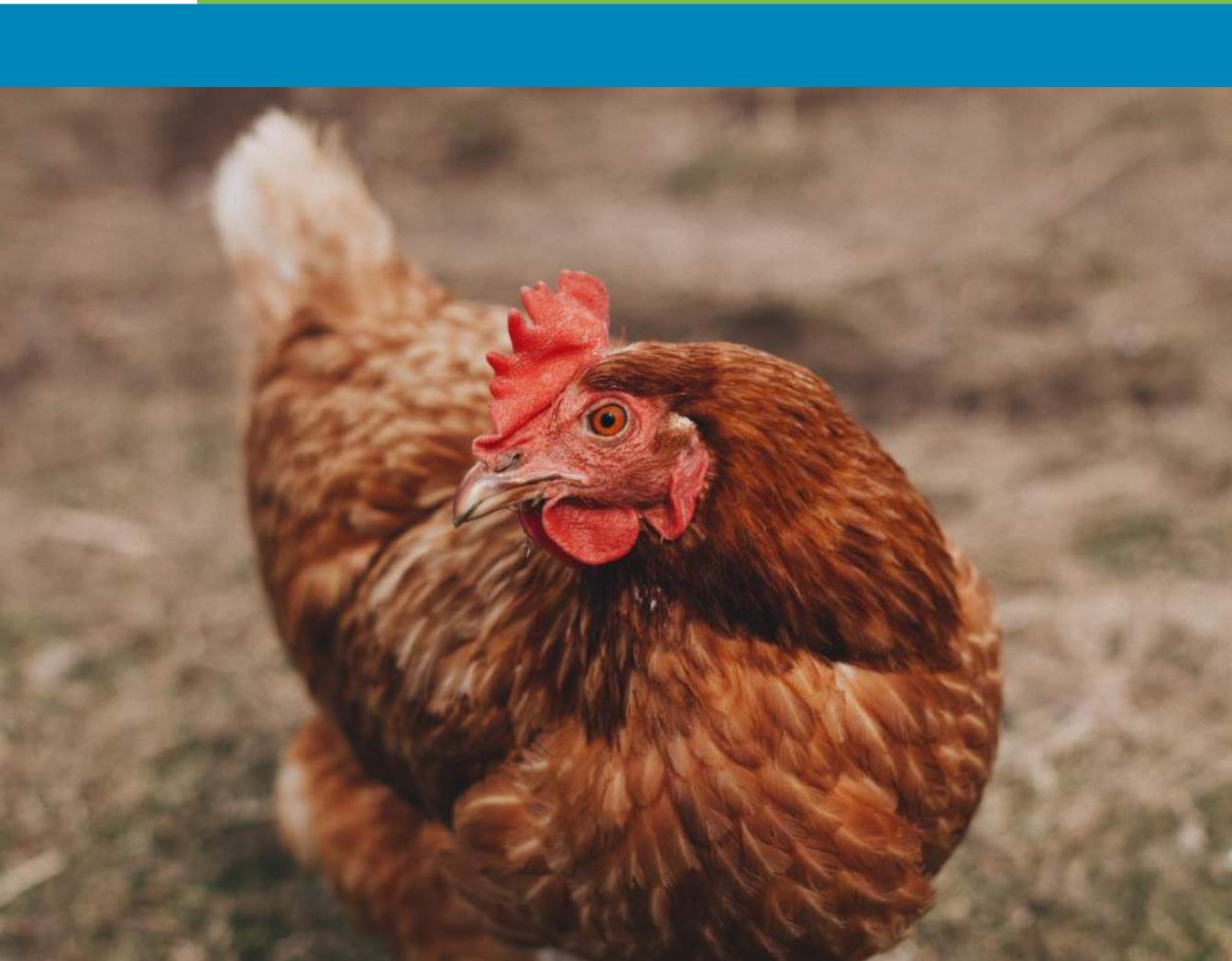


ANIMAL WELFARE PRIORITIES
for the Australian Government 2022



AUSTRALIA'S AUTHORITY ON PREVENTING ANIMAL CRUELTY FOR MORE THAN 150 YEARS

The RSPCA is Australia's leading animal welfare authority and exists to improve and promote the welfare of Australian animals. From companion animals to farm animals, wildlife, animals in research and animals in sport and entertainment, we advocate for all creatures great and small. We are Australia's most recognised and most trusted animal welfare organisation.

The RSPCA comprises of the RSPCA Australia national office and eight state and territory RSPCA member Societies. RSPCA member Societies care for and protect animals across the country through animal shelters, and in most jurisdictions, inspectorate services.

Each year the RSPCA in Australia:

- Receives and cares for more than 100,000 animals.
- Investigates tens of thousands of reports of animal cruelty and neglect.
- Educates Australians on animal welfare, responsible animal care and companion animal guardianship through school, community and online initiatives.
- Advocates for legislative and policy change to improve the lives of all animals.

Contemporary animal welfare science provides the basis for all RSPCA advocacy, education and policies. We proactively work with a range of stakeholders including government and industry to improve animal welfare.

AUSTRALIANS CARE ABOUT ANIMAL WELFARE

Animals are vital to the Australian way of life — socially, culturally and economically — and Australians care about animal welfare.

Despite the unprecedented challenges Australia has faced in the past electoral period, animals remain a high priority for Australians. Yet a lack of national leadership has contributed to Australia's comparatively poor international ranking in animal welfare.



2022 - TIME FOR ACTION

The RSPCA calls on parliamentarians and the next Australian Government to take action to improve animal welfare, reflect these important community expectations and show they care about animals too.

There is a lot we can and must do. There are many animal welfare priorities that need to be urgently addressed in Australia. This federal election, we are focusing on two key animal welfare priorities that are within the remit of the Australian Government.

Both these priorities are vital to Australia's international reputation and trade success. Both have strong community support, and both are crucial to delivering on longstanding public expectations for better animal welfare in Australia.

RSPCA'S ANIMAL WELFARE PRIORITIES FOR THE 2022 FEDERAL ELECTION

We are calling on parliamentarians and the Australian Government to:

- 1. Support a five-year phase out of Australia's live sheep exports**
- 2. Provide national leadership by establishing an independent statutory agency for animal welfare**



PRIORITY #1: SUPPORT A FIVE-YEAR PHASE OUT OF AUSTRALIA'S LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS

ISSUES

Australia's live sheep trade puts hundreds of thousands of sheep at risk of extreme suffering ever year.

Contemporary animal welfare science shows sheep suffer extremely poor welfare on live export voyages and industry reports show hundreds die on board each year. Live export exposes sheep to extreme temperatures, humidity, and unfamiliar and constant movement onboard. During live export voyages, many sheep cannot easily access food and water or lie down at the same time. They are confined to pens where they must stand and lie in their own waste for weeks on end. The ammonia build-up and poor ventilation causes health issues in sheep, such as respiratory disease and eye infections. Their arrival at the end of a live export voyage does not mean an end to suffering.

The majority of Australians want an end to live export.¹

The most recent independent poll commissioned by RSPCA Australia and conducted in January 2022 once again showed that most Australians – around two out of three – want an end to live export. The community's expectations on animal welfare are not reflected in Australia's live export policies.

Australia's live export regulations fail to protect animal welfare.

Australia is one of the world's largest exporters of [live animals](#)² and the world's fifth largest [exporter of sheep](#)³. The Australian Government's Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) governs the handling and management of Australia's live-exported animals from the point of disembarkation to slaughter. Yet the ESCAS does not adequately protect all sheep who are exported from suffering.

Regulatory deficiencies continue to result in poor sheep welfare on board live export vessels. Live sheep export regulations that were implemented to better protect animal welfare – many of which were insufficient to begin with – continue to be gradually eroded. The two-and-a-half-month prohibition period, introduced in 2019, to limit the time sheep can be exported to the Middle East during the Northern Hemisphere Summer was recently reduced for [Red Sea destinations](#).⁴

SOLUTION

There is a more humane alternative to Australia's live sheep exports - keep sheep in Australia by supporting a phase-out of live sheep exports in favour of a meat-only trade. This will result in better welfare for sheep and more [jobs for Australians](#).⁵

ACTIONS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

1. Implement a phase-out of live sheep exports within a five-year period.
2. Until the phase-out is complete, extend the prohibition period permanently to include the high-risk northern summer months entirely from 1 May to 31 October.
3. Until the phase-out is complete, immediately reinstate Independent Observers and halve the stocking density for all live sheep shipments.
4. Until the phase-out is complete, implement all recommendations of the Moss Review (2018)⁶, including prioritisation of the Department's inspection regimes.
5. Dedicate greater resources to the administration of the ESCAS, including strengthening the Government's role in investigating reported non-compliances and imposing adequate sanctions.

CASE STUDY

MV Maysora – Fremantle to Eilat (Israel) and Aqaba (Jordan), [October 2019](#)⁷

Animal welfare indicators reported – signs of significant heat stress, food and water deprivation, frantic feeding events observed, maximum wet bulb temperatures on sheep decks 31.4°C (3.4°C above maximum tolerance level), 35% of the sheep on-board had a fleece length exceeding the export standard over most of their body, fleece lengths >50mm observed, open-mouth panting observed in 10-20% of sheep (heat stress indicator deemed unacceptable), live but moribund sheep found in the morgue and 81 sheep died (0.20% mortality).

PRIORITY #2: PROVIDE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP BY ESTABLISHING AN INDEPENDENT STATUTORY AGENCY FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

ISSUES

Australia lacks a national framework to support [animal welfare improvements](#).⁸

The Australian Government withdrew funding for animal welfare and devolved its role in animal welfare to state and territory governments in 2013. Nearly a decade on, the result of these changes has been a lack of national focus and resourcing, competing roles of government departments, inconsistent laws across state and territory jurisdictions, and complex development processes for animal welfare standards. Achieving consistency in animal welfare standards within a federated system of government needs national leadership and coordination.

Federal government agencies currently responsible for the productivity and efficiency of animal production industries struggle to protect animal welfare.

There are inherent competing priorities for federal government departments expected to promote the competitiveness, efficiency and productivity of industries involving animals while considering animal welfare. For example, the Moss Review (2018)⁹ found that the 2013 cuts to animal welfare services contributed to a culture that neglected animal welfare responsibilities and that the Department of Agriculture struggled to balance its competing roles of promoting industry and protecting animal welfare.

Our international reputation and trade success is at risk.

Australia's poor animal welfare status is recognised globally and directly impacts the nation's trade relations and arrangements. Australia's poor animal welfare practices for farm animals are creating issues with current trading partners that value higher animal welfare standards. If not addressed, this issue will continue to tarnish Australia's international reputation and has the potential to impact long-term future trade opportunities.

SOLUTION

Establish a federal independent statutory agency for animal welfare to enable consistency, expertise, accountability and impartiality in:

- Developing, coordinating and improving Australia's animal welfare standards for farm animals.
- Harmonising state and territory animal welfare frameworks.
- Overseeing the development and implementation of national animal welfare initiatives.
- Providing independent and evidence-based advice to government on animal welfare.

ACTIONS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

1. The Australian Government must reinstate its leadership role in animal welfare and dedicate resources to a new national framework, which includes the establishment of an independent statutory agency dedicated to animal welfare.
2. The framework must be one that facilitates expert input and advice to government from a broad range of perspectives, seeks to harmonise animal welfare standards across jurisdictions, and coordinates research funding to improve animal welfare outcomes.
3. Any federal government departments responsible for developing animal welfare policy must be independent of conflicting institutional objectives and adequately resourced with personnel who have animal welfare credentials.

CASE STUDY

Around half of Australia's [22 million layer hen national flock](#)¹⁰ live their lives in barren battery cages. 2022 marks the seventh year that Australia's poultry standards have been under review and state/territory jurisdictions have debated a timeline to phase out battery cages. While scientific evidence has long shown battery cages do not support the basic welfare needs of hens, and many other countries have prohibited battery cage systems, Australia has not achieved any nationally consistent standards to protect layer hens. Instead, over this time, more than 60 million hens have been confined to barren battery cages for their entire lives. This is just one example of how a lack of national leadership and a complex standards development and review process is resulting in poor welfare in Australia and impacting our global reputation.

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For more information, visit rspca.org.au

The RSPCA is a leading animal welfare organisation and one of Australia's most recognised and trusted charities. RSPCA Australia's mission is to prevent cruelty to animals by actively promoting their care and protection.

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