



Are sheep and cattle fit to load?

Current as of March 2023.

This factsheet assists a person responsible for livestock in meeting their animal welfare obligations when assessing whether sheep and cattle are fit for selection and loading for transport.

Stock must be fit for the journey

Under the Animal Welfare (Transport, Saleyards and Depots) (Cattle and Sheep) Regulations 2020 (Transport Regulations), it is an offence for all persons involved in the process to supply for transport or load sheep or cattle that are unfit to take the journey.

You must not supply for transport or load sheep or cattle if they:

- cannot walk independently by bearing weight on all hooves
- are in late pregnancy (see note)
- are emaciated
- are visibly dehydrated
- are showing visible signs of severe injury or distress
- are blind in both eyes
- have a prescribed condition (see right)
- have any other condition, injury or disease likely to result in an increase in pain or distress during transport.

Note: Late pregnancy = cattle 37 weeks or more; sheep 19 weeks or more pregnant. Late-pregnant sheep and cattle may be transported directly to another place as long as it is not an abattoir or saleyard and the time off water and journey is likely to be less than 4 hours.

Prescribed conditions

You must not supply for transport or load sheep or cattle if they have any of the prescribed conditions below:

- broken horn that is bleeding or discharging
- ingrown horn (the horn has penetrated or is in contact with the animal's eye or eyelid or other part of the body)
- broken leg
- dropped or engorged udder
- flystrike
- lesion (wound, ulcer, abscess or sore) of the pizzle, penis, sheath or scrotum
- abnormal neurological signs (including staggering, stargazing, convulsions, paralysis)
- a tumour more than 3cm long
- a hernia
- uterine, vaginal or rectal prolapse
- a visible discharging lesion (wound, ulcer, abscess or sore) more than 3cm long.

Animals unfit for the journey

The consignor is responsible for making appropriate arrangements for any animals identified as unfit to take the journey at the first reasonable opportunity. These arrangements include one or more of the following, depending on the animal's condition:

- separating the animal from others until it has recovered
- treating the animal
- humanely euthanising the animal.

Animals unfit to take the journey may be loaded if the consignor or transporter has advice from a veterinarian that the animal can take the intended journey and it is loaded and transported in accordance with the veterinarian's advice. Where an animal is transported under veterinary advice, it is recommended the advice is provided in writing, clearly identifying the animal(s) to which it applies and the conditions under which it can be transported. A copy of this advice should accompany the animal(s) to the final destination.

These animals must not be sent to a saleyard as they cannot be offered for sale or sold.

Penalties

Animal welfare inspectors can issue infringement notices ranging from \$500 to \$750 for Transport Regulations breaches. If non-compliance with the Regulations is referred to the courts, penalties of up to \$15,000 apply. More serious incidents may still be the subject of a prosecution for cruelty under the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*.

More information

- Animal Welfare (Transport, Saleyards and Depots) (Cattle and Sheep) Regulations 2020
- Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines: Land Transport of Livestock; Livestock at Saleyards and Depots
- Animal Welfare Factsheets:
 - Assessing beef cattle body condition for transport or sale at a saleyard
 - Assessing dairy cattle body condition for transport or sale at a saleyard
 - Assessing sheep body condition for transport or sale at a saleyard
 - Transporting and selling sheep with scabby mouth
 - Management of sheep and cattle with ingrown horns
 - Assessing sheep and cattle for lameness for transport or sale at a saleyards
 - Transporting and selling sheep and cattle with visible tumours and lesions
 - Transporting and selling sheep and cattle with injured or broken horns
 - Humane destruction of sheep and cattle
 - Animal Welfare Responsibilities – Consignors and Transporters
- [agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare](https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare)



For more information and to view the suite of animal welfare factsheets, scan the QR code, or visit:

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare/resources-and-publications>.

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