

# tips & tools

## LIVESTOCK EXPORT PROGRAM



## Preparation of cattle for live export

### Why I should consult this information?

For cattle to arrive overseas looking well and in good health, animals need to be prepared and processed correctly at every stage of the export chain — starting on - farm. We need to produce cattle that meet our customers' requirements.

All participants in the livestock export chain need to practice good animal welfare and abide by regulatory requirements for the benefit of the animals and the reputation and profitability of the livestock export industry. Failure to do so can result in legal action from regulatory authorities.

This Tips and Tools gives advice on methods to enhance the health and welfare of cattle during the livestock export process.

### When should I consult this information?

This is important information that applies whenever you are preparing cattle for live export, especially if you:

- depend on the live cattle trade for a significant part of your income;
- wish to avoid high mortality rates in cattle from your property.

### How I prepare my cattle for export

#### Choosing cattle

Follow advice from exporters or their agents to ensure you are supplying cattle to specifications. By adhering to exporters' specifications such as horn length, weight and fat score, cattle health and welfare will be maintained and customers' requirements will be met.

#### Other issues

Following public concerns and international media attention in 2003, the Australian Government imposed strict conditions on the livestock export industry. These conditions are contained in the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock and apply throughout the livestock export chain from livestock selection on the property through to unloading at the destination country overseas. More information about the Standards can be found at: [www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare](http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare)

In addition, rising community expectations about animal welfare have resulted in closer scrutiny of livestock handling practices by State/Territory authorities to ensure compliance with animal welfare legislation. A breach of Australian or State/Territory legislation can result in significant penalties.



#### Final Check

Before loading export cattle at the property, check that all animals are appropriately identified and meet export contract specifications — correct sex, age, weight and horn status — and that all are fit to travel. Each animal should be checked for signs of ill health or injury. Any animal with pinkeye, scours, lameness, open wounds, excessive horn length or sharp horns or that is otherwise unfit to travel must be removed.

Any animal that does not meet export contract specifications or that is sick or injured may be rejected at the assembly feedlot, with any loss borne by the vendor. Under animal welfare legislation you are responsible, together with the truck driver, for any animal that is loaded when it is not fit to travel.

Ensure that any required documentation is completed and signed, and accompanies the animals where appropriate.

## Feed and water

Cattle should be held off green feed for at least 12 hours before being transported to the assembly feedlot but not for extended periods beyond this. When cattle are held off green feed before loading, the floor of the stock crate is less slippery and there is less risk of injury in transit. Cattle also arrive cleaner and are easier to unload.

Ensure that any other feed or water withholding requirement, specified by the exporter, has been met.

## Handling

Cattle travel better if they are handled quietly with the least amount of stress. Keep the use of dogs to a minimum and either restrain or muzzle dogs that have a history of biting. Electric prodders should be used sparingly or not at all.



## Loading and transport

Ensure that the yards and loading facilities are suitable for the job and well maintained. The stock crate and truck should be well maintained, and the crate should be constructed to minimise injury and securely contain the cattle. Ensure that the loading density is appropriate.

Animals that have been transported to the assembly feedlot according to best practice will be less stressed and will adapt more easily to new conditions. The ramifications of poorly handled and transported cattle are felt throughout the chain. The time between loading on - farm and delivery to the feedlot should be kept to a minimum.

## Quality Assurance

Transporters are expected to have a Quality Assurance system in place such as Truckcare. In an effort to marry welfare concerns with the industry's desire for high-quality product, the Truckcare system has been developed for livestock transporters by the Australian Livestock Transporters Association (ALTA).

## The bottom line

Australia's producers have greatly increased their commitment to animal welfare and to ensuring that cattle for livestock export are well prepared. The livestock export trade faces greater scrutiny, particularly regarding animal welfare. The future of the trade and Australia's reputation depends on all participants ensuring that community expectations for animal welfare and customer expectations for quality are met.

## Checklist before animals leave property

### Before loading

- Yards and loading ramp are well maintained and suitable for use
- Feed curfew as specified by exporter
- Water curfew as specified by exporter
- All animals presented for loading are fit to travel
- All animals presented for loading are correctly identified
- Age, sex and weight of animals as specified by exporter
- Pregnancy status as specified by exporter
- Horn length appropriate (12cm for cattle) and blunt or as specified by exporter
- Health treatments (vaccination, medication etc) completed, as specified by exporter
- Health treatment withholding periods complied with (if applicable)
- Health status of property as specified by exporter (if applicable)

### After loading

- Stocking density is appropriate
- NVD/Waybill is completed, correct and legible
- Pre-export livestock declaration is completed, correct and legible
- On property protocol documentation attached
- If necessary, a travel plan may be needed to meet regulatory requirements

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Level 1, 165 Walker Street  
North Sydney NSW 2060  
Ph: 02 9463 9333  
Fax: 02 9463 9393  
[www.mla.com.au](http://www.mla.com.au)

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