

## **Media release – StopLiveExport SA - World Veterinary Day: 25 April**

### **SA Vets join Stop Live Export in call to ban live animal export**

On World Veterinary Day on Saturday, 25 April, Stop Live Export is delighted that the South African Veterinary Association (SAVA) has come out in support of the call to ban the exporting of live animals by sea to be slaughtered abroad. Stop Live Export unreservedly supports SAVAs statement in this regard and again calls on the government to act now to ban this barbaric and unnecessary practice. This is especially pertinent given the more humane alternative of slaughtering the animals locally, thereby stimulating our own economy and creating jobs here, and then exporting the meat in refrigerated ships.

[World Veterinary Day](#) is an annual event held on the last Saturday of April to recognize the vital contributions veterinarians make to animal health, welfare, public health, and environmental safety. Created in 2000 by the [World Veterinary Association \(WVA\)](#), it highlights the crucial role vets play in zoonotic disease control, food safety, and the "One Health" approach. This year's theme spotlights veterinarians' roles in preventing zoonotic diseases, promoting sustainable food systems, and combating antimicrobial resistance.

Stop Live Exports Chairperson, Michelle Taberer, says, "Previously, SAVAs supported a regulated approach to this issue, and has since shifted its position to advocating for a complete ban. This is extremely powerful as live animal exports cannot proceed without official veterinary certification and oversight, and a state veterinarian is effectively a gatekeeper in this process. We believe SAVAs position has changed because it is increasingly clear that it is impossible to ensure that South Africas welfare regulations are enforced in international waters."

In their statement, SAVAs is "greatly concerned by the severe and unavoidable harmful effects arising from the transport of tens of thousands of live animals, predominantly sheep, from South Africa by sea for the sole purpose of slaughter at international destinations." Like SAVAs, Stop Live Export recognises animals as sentient beings capable of experiencing negative states, especially when mistreated.

Furthermore, SAVAs states, "While the current measurement most widely used to evaluate animal welfare on these sea voyages is the mortality rate, it is important to note that animals may suffer and have severely compromised welfare long before the point of death. Death of animals at sea is very frequently caused by inanition as a result of accumulated stressors ... and is indicative of suffering prior to death."

SAVA cites extensive, well-documented scientific evidence of the distress and abuse suffered by animals, mainly sheep, transported for long periods on ships, particularly on journeys to the Middle East. Among the inherent harms, which are a fundamental part of every sea voyage, is the accumulation of excrement and ammonia (excrement piles high and the animals are forced to stand and sleep in it), severe overcrowding and the difficulties of caring for vast numbers of animals, as well as the motion of the ocean, which is extremely disorientating for land animals.

Incidental harms, which often occur, include life-threatening changes in the temperature (extreme heat) and humidity, not enough qualified personnel onboard to properly care for the animals, old ships not designed for the purpose of animal transport, poor hygiene, challenges accessing food and water due to overcrowding and herd social dynamics, and extreme physical exhaustion (inanition) caused by this environment.

Stop Live Export shares all the concerns highlighted in SAVA's statement and agrees that, even though South Africa has welfare standards, once the ship leaves South African waters, our regulations have no jurisdiction, and there is no way to ensure that even the minimum welfare standards are enforced.

Taberer says, "We are delighted that South African Vets are now in support of banning this barbaric practice. We call on the Minister of Agriculture to protect South African animals from this abuse, especially as there are more humane ways to export meat".

The Minister of Agriculture released draft regulations for public comment in July 2025. Over 17,000 comments were received of which 98% rejected the regulations and called for a ban. Government is currently reviewing the comments and we wait to see if they will release a revised version of the regulations or heed the public's call and ban the trade.

SAVA's position statement on live animal export by sea can be [read here](#)

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