

MEDIA RELEASE

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Analysis confirms value of live sheep exports to WA

The importance of live exports to Western Australia's sheep industry has been confirmed by new research showing nearly 30% of sheep and lamb turnoff went into the trade over the past five years.

Analysis carried out by Mecardo, funded by LiveCorp and Meat & Livestock Australia, shows that nationally, almost half of all revenue generated by live exports is retained on farm, earning producers around \$100 million per year on average.

LiveCorp chairman Terry Enright, himself a WA sheep producer, says there are many others in the state who are also heavily reliant on the trade.

"Fodder manufacturers and sheep buyers, for instance, derive 75-100% of their income from live exports, while it provides 25-50% of the income earned by veterinarians in the supply chain," Mr Enright said.

"Nationally, the report shows direct employment of 1,037 workers on-farm, and 3,443 people across the supply chain."

Mr Enright says while numbers have dropped over recent years, it is still a vital market.

"The national sheep flock has fallen dramatically since the end of the wool reserve price scheme in the 1990s, and that's reflected in live export numbers.

"However, it gives producers another buyer for surplus sheep, especially in WA. The port at Fremantle handles more than 80% of all live sheep leaving Australia – around 1.5 million a year.

"In times of drought that outlet is even more important, giving producers a way to reduce stocking numbers and protect their pastures by offloading wethers while still retaining the breeding ewes needed to rebuild their flocks when the time comes."

Live exports are less important to other states, representing an average of 5% of annual sheep and lamb turn off in South Australia, just 0.3% for Victoria and 0.1% for the remaining states over the past five years.

Once again, though, in periods of high turnoff the trade provides vital support to producers. During 2000 to 2010, the sheep flock in NSW declined by 44%. The annual percentage of sales to live exports during this period was more than four and a half times higher than the average for 2014-18.

The report, *Value analysis of the Australian live sheep export trade*, is available on the LiveCorp website at www.livecorp.com.au

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