



09 June 2025

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Prime Minister
Christopher.Luxon@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Chris,

COALITION AGREEMENT TO REINSTATE LIVE EXPORT BY SEA

As the legislation for reinstating the export of farmed animals by sea enters its last stages before being introduced to the House, SPCA New Zealand is writing to you - and all government MPs - to ask you to reconsider.

There is still time to lead the way in doing the right thing, Prime Minister. History will not look kindly on this decision.

A nationally representative, independent survey¹ commissioned by SPCA in late 2024 found that just 27% of National voters support the proposal to reinstate live exports, down from 36% in 2023. Only 22% of farmers or those involved in the sector want to see the ban overturned. More broadly, two-thirds of respondents thought there are more important issues for you to focus on.

Directing public service resources toward reversing the ban is inefficient. That effort could instead strengthen areas where New Zealand is well-positioned to lead - for instance, by setting high standards for the export of breeding stock by air, or for the live export of other species such as native eels and crayfish.

Reinstating the export of farmed animals by sea neither significantly boosts the economy nor backs New Zealand's world-leading farmers. We support good farmers, and we know that they care for their animals. Few voices support continuation of the trade – tellingly, Federated Farmers has not surveyed their membership on this issue. As one Southland dairy farmer told us: *"It's an animal welfare issue, not a political one."*²

You're being advised that new standards for live export can protect animals. That simply isn't true, Prime Minister. SPCA is a strong believer in high standards, and we champion improved welfare regulations in many sectors. But this is not one of them. The risks are inherent to the trade itself, and we cannot ensure the humane treatment of animals once they leave our borders.

Veterinarian Dr. John Hellström, former Chief Veterinary Officer for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and former Chair of the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, put it bluntly³: *"They talk about using the best ships. Well, even the best ships are pretty bloody awful."*

¹ <https://www.sPCA.nz/news-and-events/news-article/new-live-export-survey>

² <https://www.sPCA.nz/news-and-events/news-article/live-export-anniversary>

³ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/511035/more-than-11-000-support-petition-to-keep-ban-on-live-animal-exports>



Speaking of the best ships, there simply aren't any new livestock ships being built⁴. We assume that's why your Ministers have stopped referring to requiring purpose-built ships as a bottom line. The truth is that overturning the ban starts a countdown to the next inevitable disaster at sea - after all, livestock ships are twice as likely to suffer a total loss as cargo vessels⁵. Have you planned what you'll say when that disaster strikes?

We have enclosed photos of cattle being exported by sea for your information. SPCA is often asked about the provenance of images like these. Some of the photos are from a New Zealand live export journey from New Zealand to China in the 18 months before the ban; they were taken by an anonymous veterinarian who bravely submitted them to the Primary Production Select Committee.

Others are from a live export journey from Australia to China. The animals in the video were subject to the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL), which the Australian industry calls the "international gold standard". Does that sound familiar?

Has the live export industry provided any photographs or video footage from the middle of these journeys? Have they committed to on-board cameras, continuous livestock monitoring, and an independent observer programme? Without proof that animal welfare can be protected, reinstating the trade is indefensible.

This Government has taken commendable steps for animals, with an impending ban on greyhound racing and restrictions on prolonged tethering of dogs. The engagement from the responsible Minister, Andrew Hoggard, has been positive and constructive to date.

One decision now could undo all of that goodwill in the animal welfare portfolio overnight.

We respectfully urge you to reconsider supporting legislation to overturn New Zealand's ban on the export of farmed animals by sea.

Ngā māua nā,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Todd Westwood".

Todd Westwood
CEO

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dr Arnja Dale".

Dr Arnja Dale
Chief Scientific Officer

⁴ <https://www.beefcentral.com/live-export/figures-reveal-decreasing-livestock-shipping-capacity/>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/oct/28/exclusive-livestock-ships-twice-as-likely-to-be-lost-as-cargo-vessels>



Source: Anonymous New Zealand Veterinarian https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/submissions-and-advice/document/53SCPP_EVI_115891_PP2427/anonymous-a from a New Zealand to China journey in the 18 months before the ban.





Source: Stills from whistleblower footage of an Australia to China journey shown on One News in 2024. The whistleblower has requested that we make it clear that Australian and New Zealand voyages to China are very similar.

