

New Zealanders Oppose Plans To Resume Live Sheep Trade

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23 March 2009 - The New Zealand Government revealed earlier today that agreement has been reached on a number of substantive issues towards a bilateral Agreement with Saudi Arabia to re-open the way for the export of live sheep for slaughter.

Only 26% of New Zealanders believe the country's live sheep trade should resume, according to research released today by The Nielsen Company.

Programmes manager for the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), Bridget Vercoe, said the live transport of animals for slaughter is one of the greatest causes of animal suffering in the world.

Despite efforts by a number of governments to improve the welfare of transported livestock, it is impossible to prevent the inherent suffering of animals transported long distances by sea.

In 2006, Australia, the world's largest exporter of sheep for slaughter exported more than four million sheep to the Middle East. Almost 37,000 of these animals died during the gruelling land and sea journeys from pneumonia, salmonellosis and starvation, she said.

“New Zealand's Customs Exports Prohibition (Livestock for Slaughter) Order has been cited as an example for other countries to follow, and the Government applauded for its forward-thinking stance on this issue.”

“It would be a shame to see New Zealand's international reputation as a responsible exporter damaged in exchange for allowing the business aspirations of one company to be met.”

“The long distance transportation of animals for slaughter falls well short of providing animals with the level of protection now demanded by most developed countries, and runs counter to New Zealand's pioneering animal welfare legislation,” Ms Vercoe said.