



Government
of South Australia

Department of Primary
Industries and Regions

RSPCA 
South Australia

Farm Animal Transport Guide

Is my animal(s) fit for transport?



It's AGAINST THE LAW to consign, transport or hold animals who are distressed, injured or in pain

It's AGAINST THE LAW to consign, transport or hold animals who are distressed, injured or in pain

Animals must be fit for the intended journey

It's **YOUR** responsibility to ensure an animal is fit for the proposed journey. In South Australia (SA), under the *Animal Welfare Regulations* (SA) you can be fined up to \$2,500 or prosecuted under the *Animal Welfare Act* (SA) for consigning, transporting or holding unfit animals.

Assess all animals

Use this document, the advice in the *Is the animal fit to load? guide*, or the *Glovebox Guide: Biosecurity, EADs and Animal Welfare* to help assess whether the animal is fit for the proposed journey.

The animal is unfit if the animal is:

- X** non-weightbearing on any leg
- X** knuckling over or falling and unstable when moving
- X** emaciated or visibly dehydrated
- X** suffering from heat stress (panting)
- X** blind in both eyes
- X** in late pregnancy
- X** showing signs of injury or distress
- X** showing signs of pain (e.g. non-weightbearing and/or knuckling over on any limb, arched back, dullness, depression, isolation, or protecting a particular body part)
- X** has a condition where transport is likely to cause increased pain or distress

Identifying lameness

If the animal can bear weight on all legs and walk without showing signs of injury/lameness/distress and if it is not obvious that the condition will cause increased pain or distress during transport, then this will satisfy the criteria for 'fit to transport'.

Proof an animal is in pain

Proof that the animal is in pain is not required when assessing the fitness of an animal.

What to do if the animal is not ok?

- Contact a vet for assessment and advice on best treatment for the animal.
- If the animal has fully recovered, they can be loaded. If not, ensure immediate vet treatment or euthanasia.
- Where there is no treatment or alternative, the animal must be humanely euthanised.
- For advice on compromised drought-affected animals call the Drought Hotline 1800 931 314.

It is an offence to supply or load animals who are not fit for the intended journey (unless under the advice of a vet)

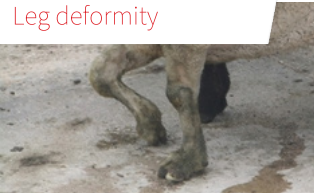
Conditions to look for to assess an animal

Protect yourself - protect animal welfare!

It is not acceptable to 'cherry pick' parts of this document, the *Is the animal fit to load?* guide or the *Glovebox Guide* to support the view that just the ability to bear weight no matter to what degree is enough to declare fitness.

Signs of lameness

Leg deformity



Foot abscess



Recent injury



Old fracture



Recent injury/footrot

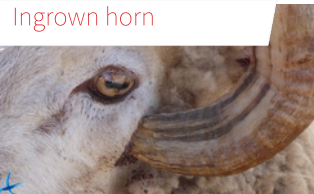


Knuckling over



Visible signs of injury or conditions that compromise welfare

Ingrown horn



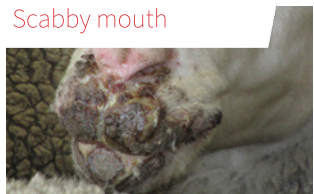
Hernia



Udder infection



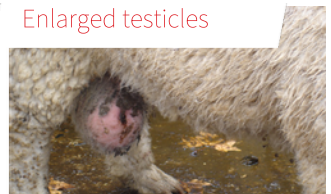
Scabby mouth



Cancer: Vulva



Enlarged testicles



Photos courtesy of Animals' Angels and MLA

For more details visit
mla.com.au/isitfittoload

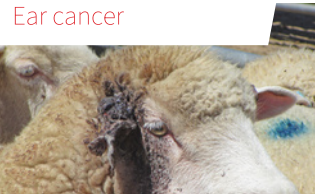


Look out for signs that the animal is NOT fit to load

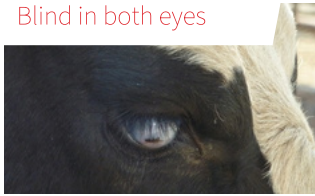
Protect yourself - protect animal welfare!

Visible signs of injury or conditions that compromise welfare

Ear cancer



Blind in both eyes



Eye disease



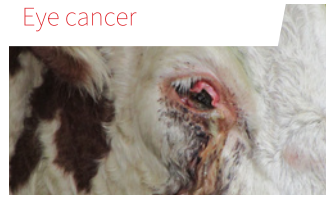
Mouth cancer



Skin cancer



Eye cancer



Emaciated, dehydrated or weak



Late pregnancy



Note: The Australian Animal Welfare Standards for the Land Transport of Animals requires animals within the last 2–4 weeks of gestation only be transported under veterinary advice. Use the QR code here for species-specific pregnancy limits.



Look out for signs that an animal is NOT fit to load

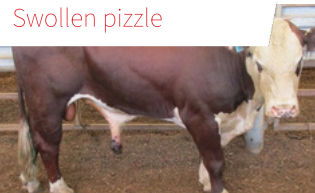
Protect yourself - protect animal welfare!

An animal is not fit for the journey if they:

- display any abnormal behavior such as limping, panting or head-bobbing
- are injured, unwell, abnormal or distressed

Other visible signs of injury or conditions that will compromise welfare

Swollen pizzle



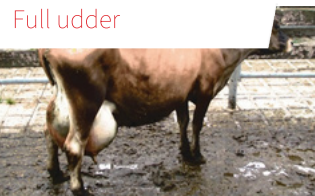
Lumpy jaw



Refusal to stand or walk



Full udder



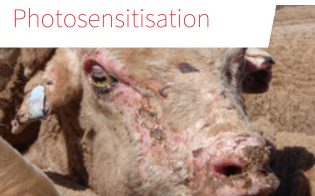
Fly strike



Panting or heat stress



Photosensitisation



Broken horn



Long claws



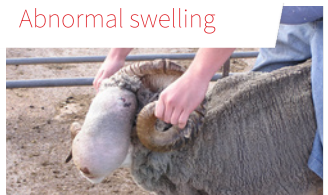
Rectal prolapse



Mastitis



Abnormal swelling



Photos courtesy of Animals' Angels and MLA

For more details visit
mla.com.au/isitfittoload



Animal welfare during drought

Protect yourself - protect animal welfare!

Property managers are responsible for the welfare of their animals. Plans MUST be in place to adequately manage animal welfare in deteriorating seasonal conditions like drought.

This card applies to mismanagement or neglect resulting in poor animal condition. Transport of animals should be undertaken before their body condition deteriorates to a stage where their welfare would be compromised during transport.

Where feed and water requirements for animals are not being met due to a poor season, owners must:

- 1) supply supplementary feed, and/or
- 2) agist or sell animals that are fit to travel, and
- 3) humanely kill or euthanise animals who are unfit for travel and cannot be treated



Criteria for humane killing or euthanasia on property

Where other reasonable management options have been carefully considered, animals in high-risk categories (see over page) may need to be humanely killed or euthanised on property if they meet any of the following conditions:

- they fall down or are knocked over easily
- they are unable to stand without assistance
- they have an unsteady gait
- adequate good quality feed cannot be provided
- adequate good quality water cannot be provided
- the animals cannot be closely monitored
- it is uneconomical or not possible to transport, sell or feed due to circumstances

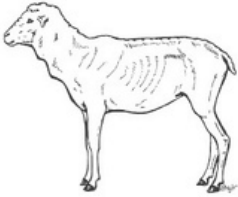
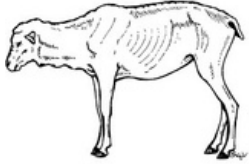

Note: humane killing or euthanasia must be undertaken without delay.

It is an offence in SA to let animals starve to death or lose condition to the point where their welfare is at risk.

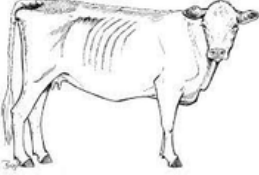
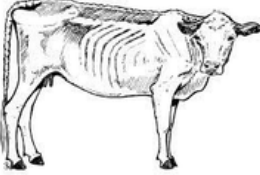

Scan the QR code for more detailed information



Welfare decisions for sheep

Condition	At risk	High risk 1	High risk 2
Description	 <p>Lean but strong and healthy, with limited muscle wastage. Reduced reproductive performance likely.</p>	 <p>Significant muscle wastage. Unlikely to conceive. At risk of death from cold, wet weather or other stress. Recovery is dependent on high quality care.</p>	 <p>Weak with extremely low body reserves. Animal is recumbent at point of death.</p>
Transport, sale	Suitable for transport and sale but with minimum time off feed and water.	Unsuitable for sale at saleyards or transport over long distances.	Cannot travel. Must not be transported.
Actions required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be fed adequately to prevent further weight loss. • Suitable for transport to agistment. • Suitable for sale but must not be kept off feed or water. • Supervise and be ready to assist during lambing – supervise lamb after birth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be fed adequately immediately to prevent weight loss. • Not suitable for long distance transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanely kill or euthanise on-farm or seek urgent veterinary assistance to do so.

Welfare decisions for cattle

Condition	At risk	High risk 1	High risk 2
			
Description	Strong but lean with noticeable muscle wastage. Reduced reproductive performance likely.	Healthy but with significant muscle wastage. Unlikely to conceive. Able to recover in time if adequately fed.	Weak, with very low body reserves. At risk of death from cold, wet weather or other stress. Recovery dependent on high quality care and will be slow.
Transport, sale	Suitable for transport and sale. Only minimum time off feed and water.	Unsuitable for sale at saleyards or transport over long distances.	Cannot travel. Must not be transported.
Actions required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be fed adequately to prevent further weight loss. • Suitable for transport to agistment. • Suitable for sale but must not be kept off feed or water. • Supervise and be ready to assist during calving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be fed adequately to prevent weight loss. • Suitable for transport direct to agistment. • Suitable for sale only direct to farm or abattoir with care. • Supervise closely and be ready to assist during calving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not transport. • Supervise closely and be ready to assist during calving. • Must be given high-quality feed, water and care; OR • Humanely kill or euthanise on-farm or seek urgent veterinary assistance to do so.

A national guide to describing and managing beef cattle in low body score condition



Animal welfare is YOUR responsibility

YOU are responsible for the welfare of the animal(s) under your control and for protecting them from distress, pain and injury.

Any ‘person in charge’ who prepares to transport or transports or sells an unfit animal, commits an act of cruelty and may be prosecuted.

Your ‘duty of care’ is to avoid and resolve animal welfare risks or problems before they cause harm and become acts of cruelty. Animal welfare must not be left to chance at any point.

The person in charge changes throughout the journey to ensure a ‘chain of responsibility’.

This means there is a person in charge, and legally responsible for the welfare of the animals, at every point of handling, transporting, marketing or processing the animals.

Who’s in charge of animals along the intended journey?	
Farmer / Producer / Consignor	Prior to loading for transport
Transporter / Driver / Owner or company that controls the vehicle use	Loading, during the journey, and unloading
Receiver (e.g. agent, saleyard, processor, etc.)	After unloading from transport

More than one person can be responsible for animal welfare at any point

A person in charge of protecting animal welfare before and during transport can include:

- **the owner** of the animal
- **an agent** involved in the buying or selling of the animal
- **the consignor** of the animals where the journey commences (e.g. farm, saleyard or any other place where animals are loaded onto a vehicle)
- **the transport driver** and the animals transport company owner/manager involved in transporting the animals
- a person who has actual **physical custody or control** of the animal, or their staff
- **a person who is handling the animal** and the company owner/manager involved in handling the animals

It is unacceptable to bully or coerce a person into loading, unloading or selling an animal who is unfit, distressed, in pain or injured.

Know your responsibilities for animal welfare

Protect yourself - protect animal welfare!

What are the responsibilities for people in charge of animals?	
Farmer / Producer / Consignor	Muster and assemble animals
	Provide ample dry feed and water and record dates and times
	Prepare animals, including assessment and selection as 'fit for the intended journey' or secure veterinary assessment to assess
	Arrange appropriate treatment for animals not fit to load in accordance with their condition (e.g. separation and rest; vet treatment; humane euthanasia)
	Ensure all animals are National Animals Identification System (NLIS) compliant
	Only supply animals assessed as fit for the intended journey to the transporter
	Pass onto the driver the animal's last access to feed and water prior to loading
	Advise the transporter at the point of loading on the fitness of animals and any other detail about the animals to be transported
	Accurately and legibly complete transport documentation required in SA - Animals Production Assurance (LPA) and National Vendor Declaration (NVD)
Provide written information on who to contact in an emergency	
Driver / Company or Owner of the vehicle	Provide safe and fit for purpose vehicle for transport of the animals
	Find out how long the animals have been off feed and water before loading – if the journey will take more than 24 hours, the 'person in charge' must record the date and time animals last had access to water and feed and time of last inspection
	Assess animals frequently to determine whether any appear to be weak, injured, ill or distressed - on the vehicle before departure, within the first hour of the journey, and at least every 3 hours or at every driver rest stop or at vehicle changeover (whichever comes first), and at unloading
	Record any welfare concerns during transport and action taken, and alert and provide this record to the receiver at unloading
	Ensure regular spelling periods where animals are unloaded, rested and have access to dry feed and water throughout the journey
	Do not exceed 24-hour transit period with the animals without spelling

Driver / Company or Owner of the vehicle (cont.)	Ensure the required loading density is not exceeded to protect animals from injury, pain or death
	Minimise the impact of temperature or weather conditions that individually, or in combination, are likely to predispose animals to heat or cold stress
	Ensure animals are loaded safely including: assess 'fit for intended journey' during loading and final unloading; properly aligned ramp onto the vehicle to minimise the risk of injury to the animals being loaded; proper segregation of animals; all pen and vehicle doors are secured before moving; no dogs transported in the same pen as animals unless the dog is a animals guardian dog
	Accurately and legibly complete transport documentation required in SA - Animals Production Assurance (LPA) and National Vendor Declaration (NVD)
Receiver (e.g. Agent, Processor, Saleyard)	Provide transporters with contact details, including out of hours contacts, of relevant personnel at the destination, should assistance be needed on arrival
	Provide clear instructions on requirement for unloading and managing animals including feed and water if arriving out of hours
	Provide low stress handling and management of the animals in accordance with national land transport standards and the standards for saleyards and depots
	Ensure any weak, ill or injured animal identified at unloading is urgently treated or humanely euthanised to stop the animal suffering further
	Ensure all transport documentation has been completed accurately and legibly
	Provide suitable unloading and secure holding facilities that protect animals from injury, weather, predators etc.
	Ensure all animals have sufficient space in the pen to lie down and rest at the same time
	Advise the driver/transport company and animals consignor of any adverse animal welfare outcomes from the journey that are first observed after arrival
Remove dead animals from the vehicle	

**Witnessed an incident involving animals during transport?
Call the Police on 000 or AnimalsASSIST on 1800 425 782**

MLA's advice on the responsibilities of the 'person in charge' of animals



Your responsibilities for animal welfare under the Standards for Land Transport of Animals (pg 7-20)



Your responsibilities for animal welfare under the Standards for Animals at Saleyards and Depots (pg 11)



Animal feed curfew before transport

Protect yourself - protect animal welfare!

Provide clean drinking water to animals prior to any water curfew before transport.

Journey length is a very important consideration as transport is a significant stressor for animals. It is against the law to transport animals who are unfit, distressed, in pain or injured.

Type of feed	Feed curfew		Water
Dry feed	Cattle max. 12 hours	Sheep max. 24 hours	Consider journey length, conditions and maximum permitted time off water and ensure that water curfews prior to loading are not excessive.
	Provide dry feed source as soon as the animals are taken off green feed (e.g. cereal or hay)		
	No curfew		

IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER



Take off green feed from 12 up to 24 hours prior to transport



Provide alternative dry feed source or cereal hay



You are responsible for the welfare of the animals



Animal factors:

Breed and age
Body condition
Reproductive status



Environmental factors:

Season Temperature and humidity
Time of day



Management factors:

Transport stocking density
Handling and mustering method
Duration of transport

MLA's best practice guidelines for transporting sheep



MLA's best practice guidelines for transporting cattle



Important contacts

Protect yourself - protect animal welfare!

Emergency Animal Disease Hotline – 1800 675 888

LivestockASSIST (advisory) – this is a 24/7 national hotline that coordinates emergency responses to incidents involving heavy vehicles carrying animals. The national number is 1800 4 ALRTA (or 1800 425 782). *Note: The hotline is free for anyone at the scene of an incident.*

South Australia Police – 131 444

RSPCA SA – contact in the event of animal cruelty, neglect or poor condition:

- **Hotline** – 1800 477 722 open 7 days a week from 7.00am-7.00pm
- **Inspectors** – 1800 987 582 on duty 7 days a week from 8.30am-4.30pm

National Heavy Vehicle Regulator – 13 NHVR (or 13 64 87)

Call this number to ensure your vehicle is able to travel on the existing network. Avoid using back tracks or off-network roads to get around road closures.

Department of SA Primary Industries and Regions South Australia – 1800 255 556

District Animal Health Officers:

https://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal_health/contact_us

**Taking care of animal welfare optimises productivity
and it is your LEGAL OBLIGATION!**

Scan this QR code for up-to-date details about roadworks, incidents and planned events in SA that could disrupt the intended journey



RSPCA
South Australia



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