

## INFORMATION BRIEF

### Eid al Adha/Korban 2014

#### What is Eid al Adha/Korban?

Eid al Adha (Middle East) or Korban (South East Asia) means the Festival of the Sacrifice and marks the completion of the *hajj* (pilgrimage) rites at Mina and commemorates of the trials of Abraham who was prepared to sacrifice his only son in reverence to Allah. During Eid Muslims all over the world sacrifice a sheep, goat, cow or camel. The sacrificed animals are called *adhiya* and must meet a certain age and quality standard. The meat from the sacrificed animal is divided into three parts. A third is given to the poor and needy, a third is given to relatives, friends and neighbours and the final third is retained by the family.

In 2014 Eid/Korban will be held between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of October.

#### The Australian livestock export industry's role in Eid

Millions of animals will be slaughtered over the Eid/Korban period including livestock from Africa, Europe and South America. Australian livestock will only make up a small percentage of these numbers but despite this, Australian exporters have been actively working in market for many weeks preparing systems to manage the challenges of this high pressure, high demand period for livestock. This work has involved forging animal management and sales systems that respect the practice of religious traditions while ensuring good welfare practices and outcomes for Australian livestock.

No other country in the world does anything similar, and indeed, anything at all. We believe these measures are even unique to Australia where Eid/Korban is also celebrated.

The desire for home slaughter of animals including handling, transport and slaughter by the general public that is unaware and untrained in appropriate welfare practices places significant and acute demand for livestock. Eid Al Adha therefore represents a high risk period for unsatisfactory animal welfare practices being applied to Australian sheep, cattle and goats in overseas markets and leakage outside ESCAS approved supply chains because of the heightened demand to fulfil religious observances.

The management systems employed by Australia and its customers has evolved over a number of years - from "in the ute, not in the boot" campaigns designed to improve the transport of livestock to carcass sales and ticket systems that remove any general public interaction with Australian livestock. Cooperation has been built by Australia by working constructively with customers, feedlots and abattoirs to develop and implement systems that support religious practices rather than frustrate them including the cessation of direct livestock sales for home slaughter to ticket systems and carcass only sales models.

Under ESCAS requirements, animals must not be sold outside of approved supply chains. This means that irrespective of the management system in place at Eid/Korban, at no time of the year can Australian livestock be purchased for home slaughter or for slaughter at facilities that have not been

approved as meeting international animal welfare standards. If livestock are found outside of supply chains, this indicates illegal and unapproved removal of Australian livestock and such actions are not condoned, approved or endorsed by exporters.

### **The MLA/LiveCorp Livestock Export Program**

Exporters' activities in market for Eid/Korban are supported by resources from the Livestock Export Program (LEP). These resources are tailored to the particular needs of markets and customers and reflect the experience of previous years.

Like 2013, the objective for this year is to work with Australian exporters, and their supply chain partners to build on last year's initiatives and to deliver improved and more effective systems that meet ESCAS requirements whilst taking into consideration previous year's experiences and the expectations of Australian and overseas stakeholders. The focus will again be to provide greater assistance in the month leading up to Eid/Korban to help build livestock handling systems and management structures. This will include but not be limited to planning, implementing and testing systems that can cope with Eid/Korban; training both management and staff on ESCAS requirements and Eid/Korban systems; drafting consistent lines of livestock for public sales and contingency planning for ESCAS breaches. The LEP will also assist exporters by having people "*on the ground*" during Eid/Korban to provide operational advice and support.

### **What are the risks and challenges?**

The sale and distribution of Australian livestock (increasingly in carcase form) during Eid is done over the course of just 3 days at limited locations and meet the requirements of ESCAS. This puts enormous pressure on facilities and staff to manage the expectations of large crowds and also creates significantly increased demand for healthy Australian livestock which are in limited supply. The focus of exporters is on minimising the risk of poor welfare practices and outcomes and responding as quickly as possible to breakdowns in management systems. A range of strategies have been implemented to tailor management programs in Middle East markets to meet market needs and risks including:-

- Pre-Eid/Korban training and support by exporters and Live Export Program consultants to prepare facilities and staff in the requirements for Australian livestock management systems and welfare requirements
- Implementation of carcase only sales systems in Qatar, the trialling of the system for the first time in Kuwait and Oman and a ticket sales system in the UAE (which operates year round) which prevents the general public from accessing live animals for home slaughter
- Restricted supply chains and livestock sales systems to reduce access to Australian livestock in other markets and ensure Australian livestock are only slaughtered at approved facilities
- In Jordan and Kuwait, where there are higher risks of leakage, sheep have been paint marked to indicate the abattoirs to which they are destined
- Encouraging and supporting charity slaughtering whereby large numbers of Australian sheep are processed at ESCAS facilities and distributed to the poor. This removes individual sales and selection pressures; and
- Additional exporter and LEP consultants in market during Eid/Korban to oversee and manage systems in cooperation with customers and facilities and deal with problems as they arise.

South East Asian markets have different systems in place. In Malaysia, the slaughter of goats is undertaken at approved farms. There is no provision for slaughtering Australian livestock at mosques. A workshop has been held with importers and their supply chain members to highlight the need for planning and controls at their approved facilities, prior to Korban. Resources will be in place during Korban to provide oversight and assistance.

In Singapore, one exporter and one importer service the Korban program with an air freight consignment of up to 2,500 sheep, delivered the day before Korban, and slaughtered at approximately 18 mosques. The event is well-coordinated by the exporter, importer, Agri-food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) and Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS). A joint planning workshop was held with this group and LEP.

Despite exporter efforts, no system is foolproof and the greatest risk to the welfare of Australian livestock during Eid/Korban is leakage from supply chains. The demand for Australian livestock is so strong during this period but availability so limited that black marketeers can be expected to seek to profit from Australia's efforts to limit access to livestock in the interests of animal welfare. Any leakage should be immediately reported to authorities and Australian exporters to enable remedial actions including the recovery of stolen livestock to be undertaken where possible.

Markets such as Jordan are associated with continued reports of leakage which was apparent during Eid 2013 and reported to the Australian Government. In an attempt to minimize this risk, a working group was established that represents importers, exporters, LEP, Princess Alia Foundation and the Jordanian Government. This working group met routinely during 2014 in an attempt to develop systems to minimize leakage risks. Kuwait is also another market where there is a higher risk of leakage due to black market activities.

In these markets, exporters and customers have worked to mitigate the risk of leakage, for example the marking sheep with paint indicating different destination abattoirs and additional training and support with local staff on ESCAS requirements.