



# National Animal Welfare Policy

## General Statement

The Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association (ALRTA) is a national Federation comprising:

- Livestock, Bulk and Rural Carriers Association
- Livestock and Rural Transporters Association of Victoria
- Livestock and Rural Transporters Association of Queensland
- Livestock and Rural Transporters Association of Western Australia
- Livestock and Rural Transporters Association of South Australia
- Livestock Transporters Association of Tasmania
- Large and National Operators Member Chapter.

Together we represent more than 800 member road transport operators moving up to 20% of Australia's total road freight task – primarily in the agricultural supply chain.

Caring for live cargos is a unique part of what we do. The ALRTA expects our member operators to uphold the highest possible animal welfare standards at all times.

Yet, the demands of livestock transport are like no other part of the road freight sector. The interaction of animal welfare laws, workplace safety laws and road transport laws can create challenges in balancing the equally important elements of driver welfare and animal welfare.

This policy statement lays out the key principles of the ALRTA's holistic approach to best practice in livestock transport.

## The Legislative Environment

Livestock transporters are subject to an enormously complex legislative environment (Table 1).

All of these laws apply simultaneously and animal welfare outcomes can be affected by overlapping requirements. For example:

- road laws limit vehicle speeds
- heavy vehicle national laws limit driver work hours
- land transport standards limit the time that water can be withheld from livestock





Area	Legislation
Land Transport Standards and Guidelines for Animal Welfare	Nationally consistent state-based instruments (except WA & NT)
Heavy Vehicle National Law	Nationally consistent state-based instruments (except WA & NT)
Workplace health and safety	Nationally consistent state-based instruments (except VIC)
Prevention of cruelty	Various state-based instruments
Quarantine and biosecurity	Federal and various state-based instruments
Export control	Federal laws
Industrial	Federal and various state-based instruments
Road rules	Various state-based instruments
Vehicle standards	Federal and various state-based instruments
Vehicle registration	Federal and various state-based instruments
Driver licencing	Various state-based instruments

**Table 1:** Key legislation applicable to livestock transport.

If a loaded carrier experiences unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances that delay a journey by several hours (e.g. a mechanical breakdown), legal prohibitions can combine to create a situation in which the driver is simply unable to comply with all legislated requirements.

Value judgements must sometimes be made taking into account the welfare of the driver, livestock and other road users. For this reason, ALRTA member operators must understand the various legal requirements so that the best possible decisions can be made having regard for all of the circumstances.

**Principle 1:** Operators and drivers must be aware of all laws that apply to livestock transport and comply to the fullest extent possible.

## Core Animal Welfare Standards for Land Transport

In 2012, the Primary Industries Ministerial Council endorsed the 'Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Land Transport of Livestock'. This comprehensive document covers six broad areas of livestock transport:

- Responsibilities and planning
- Stock handling competencies
- Transport vehicles and facilities for livestock
- Pre-transport selection of livestock
- Loading, transporting and unloading of livestock
- Humane destruction





The ALRTA participated in the development of the standards and guidelines which are being progressively enshrined in legislative instruments in each State and Territory.

The ALRTA strongly endorses the standards and guidelines as the principal reference document for both minimum legal compliance and best practice for livestock road transport.

**Principle 2:** *Operators and drivers must have a detailed operational knowledge of the 'Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Land Transport of Livestock'.*

## Fit to Load Guide

In 2012, Meat and Livestock Australia published '[Is it fit to load? – A national guide to the selection of animals fit to transport](#)'. ALRTA has endorsed the guide and recommends that all member operators use it as a key reference document.

**Principle 3:** *Operators and drivers should understand and apply the MLA publication 'Is it fit to load? – A national guide to the selection of animals fit to transport'.*

## Loading Ramps and Forcing Yards

The design of livestock loading ramps and forcing yards has a direct bearing on animal welfare and driver welfare outcomes. In 2015, the ALRTA published a '[Guide for Safe Design of Livestock Loading Ramps and Forcing Yards](#)'.

The Guide summarises the potential hazards of livestock loading ramps and forcing yards and practical examples of ways to control associated risks for different types of facilities.

General principles are identified as well as a series of model ramp designs, ranging from low-cost basic designs for farms to more advanced commercial designs.

**Principle 4:** *Livestock facilities should be aware of and apply the 'Guide for Safe Design of Livestock Loading Ramps and Forcing Yards'.*





## Supporting Infrastructure

Loading and unloading livestock is the most hazardous part of the transport process.

The ALRTA encourages innovation that improves safety, animal welfare and efficiency at loading and unloading sites. In particular, the ALRTA recommends the installation and use of:

- [Side loading frames](#)
- [Cross loading frames](#)
- Overhead gantries

**Principle 5:** *Livestock facilities should be aware of and install innovative supporting infrastructure that improves safety, animal welfare and efficiency at loading and unloading sites.*

## Crate Design

The design of livestock crates can have a significant impact on handler and animal welfare. The ALRTA supports the continual development of innovative crate designs that deliver improved safety, welfare and efficiency.

**Principle 6:** *Transport operators should use well-designed livestock crates that deliver best practice safety, welfare and efficiency.*

## Livestock Preparation Prior to Road Transport

Excessive livestock effluent in transit can impact on animal welfare, load restraint, biosecurity, value of skins/hides, environment and amenity. Controlling livestock effluent in transit is a shared responsibility of the whole supply chain.

The key considerations are:

- Correct preparation of livestock prior to transport to reduce effluent generation
- Use of containment tanks on crates in known effluent loss 'hotspots'
- Provision of roadside dumping sites to enable safe and efficient effluent discharge from containment tanks
- An appropriate network of truckwashes





**Principle 7:** *All parties in the livestock supply chain should strive for best practice livestock preparation and effluent control.*

## Accreditation Systems

[TruckCare](#) is a voluntary accreditation system for livestock transporters that is primarily focussed on animal welfare, biosecurity and traceability.

The system was originally developed by the ALRTA and is now operated by the ATA TruckSafe accreditation system. TruckSafe is primarily focused on safety and heavy vehicle maintenance.

Together, the accreditation systems promote legal compliance and best practice while also enabling operators to demonstrate this to other parties in the livestock supply chain.

**Principle 8:** *User of livestock transport services should prefer truckCare accredited transport operators.*

## Accident Response

The ALRTA and NTI have together developed LivestockASSIST, a 24hr national hotline dedicated to coordinating emergency responses for rare incidents involving heavy vehicles carrying livestock.

LivestockASSIST is built around NTI's successful AccidentASSIST service and includes the usual response options such as vehicle recovery, medical assistance, driver repatriation, trauma counselling and message referral services.

Importantly however, LivestockASSIST has been tailored for livestock transport.

The service also links into an established network of local contacts with the expertise and equipment needed to recover livestock from the vehicle, round up escaped animals that may be in shock and to make decisions about veterinary services.

**Principle 9:** *Transport operators and drivers should be aware of LivestockASSIST and display signage on their vehicles to alert other road users of the number to call in the event of an accident.*





## Receival Arrangements

The complex interaction of laws applicable to livestock transport necessitates a flexible approach to receival arrangements at livestock facilities. The ALRTA recommends that facilities remain open until at least midnight on known receival days. After hours receival arrangements should also be in place so operators can unload and offer feed and water to livestock as soon as possible after arriving.

**Principle 10:** *Livestock facilities should remain open until at least midnight on known receival days and ensure that there are safe facilities available for after-hours unloading.*

## Reporting of Welfare Incidents

Livestock transporters interact with most parts of the livestock supply chain and may occasionally observe illegal treatment of livestock either directly or indirectly.

The ALRTA recommends that operators and drivers report any suspected illegal activity to the appropriate authorities.

However, livestock transporters generally have little market power in the supply chain and can be easily 'black-listed' by certain hirers, potentially jeopardising their business and family. For this reason, the ALRTA does not support either mandatory reporting or mandatory identification of the reporter.

**Principle 11:** *Operators and drivers should report any suspected illegal treatment of livestock to the appropriate authorities.*

## Balancing Driver Fatigue and Animal Welfare

Unforeseen circumstances can delay journeys and place a driver at risk of breaching either safety or animal welfare laws. For this reason the ALRTA supports a flexible approach to fatigue management laws that includes tolerances to allow a driver to reach an appropriate destination where livestock can be unloaded safely and humanely.

**Principle 12:** *The ALRTA supports flexible fatigue laws that enable drivers to unload livestock at an appropriate destination in circumstances where unforeseen circumstances have led to a delay.*





## Complaints Against Member Operators

The ALRTA will consider any written complaint made against a member operator. The complaint will be recorded and advice issued to the complainant about the most appropriate authority to deal with the issue.

In the event that a member is found guilty of an offence, and the ALRTA or relevant State Association is informed in writing, the matter will be dealt with under State Association Rules / Constitution. The rules provide for fair disciplining of members who are acting contrary to the interests of the association. Sanctions may include a warning, suspension or expulsion.

**Principle 13:** *The ALRTA will deal with proven animal welfare offences against members under State Association Rules.*

