

ONLINE ARTICLE

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Shake-up: A voluntary code covering livestock transport is set to become law.

MAJOR new laws covering livestock transport mean producers and truck drivers can be penalised without going to court.

The current voluntary code of practice will become law, under the Livestock Transport Standards, in Victoria by September, as part of a push for national standardisation of stock movement.

The Department of Primary Industries' principal veterinary officer for livestock management standards, Dr David Champness, said the new standards would simply make the voluntary code of practice mandatory.

"The bar has not changed - it's just that it will be part of legislation," he said.

"As it stands, a farmer or consignor of stock should only load those fit for the journey and a carrier should only take fit animals."

But Dr Champness admitted some livestock carriers may feel they were forced to load unfit animals by some producers because of commercial pressures.

"If the industry stands together, we can weed out those who are not practising good livestock transport standards," he said.

"The penalties are there as a deterrent."

Fines range from \$350 for an infringement, up to \$2500 if the matter goes to court.

Victorian Farmers Federation livestock group president Ian Feldtmann said all of those in the livestock chain had a responsibility to do the right thing.

"People not aware of responsibilities will be now - they will understand that, under the new legislation, there are implications if you do the wrong thing," he said.

Livestock Transport Association of Victoria president Kevin Keenan welcomed the new laws. He said truck drivers were still sometimes pressured to load unfit stock.

In one case in Gippsland, a truck driver was told by a producer to load a cow that had a foot that had rotted away.

"You can get threatened with no more work if you don't agree to take that animal, but we just can't take it," he said.

"Sadly, though, someone will eventually load that animal."

Mr Keenan said the regulations needed to be enforced by the DPI.

"Why have laws if you can't police them?" he said.

"We need the DPI to be out there and checking so those who breach the standards are fined."