

ONLINE ARTICLE

Title:	"Portland's live exports halve"
Author:	Cassandra Hough
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Today the cargo is wind turbines. The Port of Portland also ships livestock and other agricultural commodities. (Cassandra Hough)

Live sheep exports from Port of Portland in Victoria have halved in the last financial year as a result of new animal welfare regulations.

Portland has a deep water port that is usually associated with its giant woodchip mounds, but it's also the launch point for between 600,000 and 700,000 live sheep and cattle travelling overseas by ship each year.

This makes it the second largest exporter of livestock out of Australia behind Fremantle.

Exporters sending live animals overseas for slaughter must now meet the Federal Government's Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) conditions.

The port's business development manager Malcolm Geier says their live trade was held up because some export destinations had to make changes to comply with the new ESCAS standards.

"The first tranche of countries that were affected by the new requirements were our four largest trading partners for particularly live sheep. Countries such as Turkey and parts of the Middle East were particularly affected which meant that our whole market just stopped as soon as those requirements came in," Mr Geier said.

As a result only six vessels carrying live sheep left the Port in 2011/2012 financial year.

That's down from 14 the year before but that number is expected to improve with 11 ships carrying live sheep predicted to leave the port this year.

However the live cattle industry from the port has largely been unaffected because cattle are exported to different markets than the live sheep.

"Our main market is China actually and most of our cattle that go out are dairy cattle that are used over there for herd improvement. We also send a smaller amount over to Turkey and they're slaughtered over there and there are a few very small markets aside from that."

The export of dairy cattle has taken place for several years now and is still going strong.

"It was a bit of a surprise, we've seen sustained high levels of dairy cattle exports particularly into China, when the trade started we expected it would go for a few years but the trade shows no signs of slowing up."

However Mr Geier doesn't think the overall live export trade will remain strong long term.

"In the short to medium term, we don't see marked change in exports but obviously there will be seasonal variation depending on the growing conditions and the year to year demand in those markets."

"However in the longer term we are expecting to potentially see a decrease in the number of both live sheep and cattle exports and that's due to the changing markets overseas. There is a younger generation coming through that potentially aren't as wedded to having live sheep for slaughter in their country so we do see a bit of a structural change coming in the next 15 to 20 years." Mr Geier said.



A ship at the Port of Portland, Victoria | Photographer: | Cassandra Hough



Malcolm Geier, the business development manager for the Port of Portland. | Photographer: | Cassandra Hough

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