

# PRESS ARTICLE

<b>Title:</b>	“Time to upgrade stock handling facilities”
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## At a glance

- ◆ Industry must minimise livestock time on trucks
- ◆ Curfew vital to ensure sheep are not stained, rejected
- ◆ On-farm investment in stock handling facilities needed

THE SHEEP and lamb industry should not be giving animal activists the opportunity to criticise its operations, according to Australia’s peak livestock transporters body.

Eliminating unnecessary time spent on trucks was a key issue for the livestock industry to address, along with correct curfew procedure, on-farm handling facilities and fit to load assessments.

Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association president John Beer (pictured) said livestock operations – particularly feedlots – had to reconsider their operating hours to ensure stock spent as little time as possible on trucks.

Longer hours for facilities that received sheep on a regular

weekly basis would facilitate late-night unloading rather than the next morning. Overnight stints on stationary trucks increased the risk sheep would go down and stay down for hours.

He cited two sheep feedlots north of Adelaide in South Australia where trucks had to wait overnight with stock on board when they should otherwise be unloaded.

Mr Beer said it would be a better outcome for stock; improve work health and safety for drivers and eliminate potential for animal welfare criticism.

He said curfews were important but not many farmers understood or abided by them. In his view, sheep needed to be off feed at least 24 hours before transport to market.

“Some of the industry is getting better on curfews but we’ve still got professional farmers that don’t realise what it does to stock if there’s no curfew,” he said. “It’s an absolute mess if they haven’t been curfewed.”

Mr Beer said while it was frustrating for transporters, if stock were either not curfewed or



unfit to load then drivers might refuse to load them.

“Drivers are scared that if they don’t put them on, they won’t get the load again,” he said.

“My advice is don’t do it, leave them behind. If it’s going through the saleyard then it will cause a headache right through the chain.”

He said farmers could move stock around the yards to empty them faster and go with the transporter to see their condition as they leave the truck.

“I just don’t get it when sheep are over \$100, I would have thought that there’s an incentive to avoid staining and rejection of sheep.”

Given good returns for sheep, Mr Beer said on-farm facilities also needed more investment, particularly loading ramps.

Many ramps were dangerous and would not meet work health and safety requirements.

He said while conditions were improving, it was really slow. With most sheep loaded on four-deck trailers, if finances were a problem then it might be possible for a few farmers to share a portable multi-deck ramp.

“Talk to your transporter and pick his brain or go to a saleyard that has a good ramp and see what is available,” he said.

– DEANNA LUSH