



Are sheep and cattle fit to be sold at a saleyard?

Current as of March 2023.

This factsheet assists a person responsible for livestock at a saleyard in meeting their animal welfare obligations when assessing whether sheep and cattle are fit for sale at a saleyard.

Animals at a saleyard must be assessed

On arrival at a saleyard and each day they are present in the saleyard, a person responsible for the sheep and cattle must assess each animal to determine whether it appears to be weak, injured, ill or distressed. A person responsible for the animals must ensure that appropriate arrangements are made at the first reasonable opportunity for any animal that appears to be weak, injured, ill or distressed.

Animals at a saleyard must be assessed immediately prior to being presented for sale

Livestock in saleyards may be kept in yards or pens. The Animal Welfare (Transport, Saleyards and Depots) (Cattle and Sheep) Regulations 2020 (Transport Regulations) define a pen as a stall or any other kind of enclosure for confining livestock as individuals or groups and divides them into two categories:

- **Non-selling pen** – any pen other than a selling pen.
- **Selling pen** – a pen used to hold a livestock animal when it is presented for sale.

Different welfare requirements apply to each category.

A person responsible for sheep and cattle at the saleyard must ensure that each animal is assessed immediately before being presented for sale to determine if it is fit to be sold. Once the animal has been assessed as fit for sale, it can be placed in a selling pen.

An animal is deemed to be presented for sale when offered for sale or made available for purchase (e.g., the morning of the sale). Prior to this time and after the animal has been sold, the animal is not considered to be in a selling pen and penning densities need to be consistent with a non-selling pen. For more information see animal welfare fact sheet *Penning Density for Cattle and Sheep in Saleyards*.

A person responsible for sheep and cattle must ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for any animal that is unfit to be sold at the first reasonable opportunity.

Under the Transport Regulations, a person responsible for sheep and cattle at a saleyard, including the saleyard operator must not sell or present for sale any animal that is unfit for sale.

Animals that are unfit for sale cannot be transported.

Appropriate arrangements for livestock that are not fit for sale

Appropriate arrangements mean one or more of the following, depending on the condition of the animal:

- separating the animal from any other animal and resting it until it has recovered
- treating the animal as appropriate to its condition, including seeking veterinary advice
- destroying the animal using a method of humane destruction.

At the first reasonable opportunity

At the first reasonable opportunity means that the appropriate arrangements for the animal are undertaken without delay except where a reasonable delay is caused by a significant reason relating to resources, skills, safety, or the immediate welfare of other livestock.

What makes an animal unfit for sale?

An animal is unfit to be sold or offered for sale if they have any of the following conditions:

- cannot walk independently by bearing weight on all hooves
- are emaciated
- are visibly dehydrated
- are showing visible signs of severe injury or distress
- are blind in both eyes
- have a prescribed condition
- have any other condition, injury, or disease likely to result in an increase in pain or distress during transport.

Prescribed conditions include:

- broken horn that is bleeding or discharging
- ingrown horn (the horn has penetrated or is in contact with the animal's eye or eyelid or other part of the body)
- broken leg
- dropped or engorged udder
- flystrike
- lesion (wound, ulcer, abscess or sore) of the pizzle, penis, sheath, or scrotum
- abnormal neurological signs (including staggering, stargazing, convulsions, paralysis)
- a tumour more than 3cm long
- a hernia
- uterine, vaginal, or rectal prolapse
- a visible lesion (wound, ulcer, abscess or sore) that is discharging and more than 3cm long.

Animal Welfare Factsheets are available for these conditions on the DPIRD website, see [More Information](#).

Who is responsible for livestock at a saleyard?

More than one person can be responsible for an animal at any given point in time.

A person responsible for meeting welfare requirements of livestock in a saleyard includes:

- a) the operator of the saleyard, including the person responsible for the operations at the saleyard, the proprietor of the business or a person concerned with the management of the business, who owns, uses, manages, or controls the saleyard
- b) an agent of the owner of the animal who is involved in the buying or selling of the animal
- c) a person who has actual physical custody or control of the animal
- d) a person who is handling the animal
- e) a person who receives the livestock at the saleyard.
- f) If a person who is handling the animal or has actual physical custody or control of the animal is a member of staff of another person, then the other person is a person responsible for the animal.
- g) If the livestock are being assembled for the outward journey, a person responsible includes:
 - i. the consignor of the animal
 - ii. the driver of the transport vehicle
 - iii. the proprietor of the business, or a person concerned in the management of the business, that owns, uses, or manages or controls the use of the vehicle for ensuring that the livestock are fit for the intended journey.

More information

- Animal Welfare (Transport, Saleyards and Depots) (Cattle and Sheep) Regulations 2020
- Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines: Land Transport of Livestock; Livestock at Saleyards and Depots
- Animal Welfare Factsheets:
 - Assessing beef cattle body condition for transport or sale at a saleyard
 - Assessing dairy cattle body condition for transport or sale at a saleyard
 - Assessing sheep body condition for transport or sale at a saleyard
 - Transporting and selling sheep with scabby mouth
 - Management of sheep and cattle with ingrown horns
 - Assessing sheep and cattle for lameness for transport or sale at a saleyards
 - Transporting and selling sheep and cattle with visible tumours and lesions
 - Transporting and selling sheep and cattle with injured or broken horns
 - Humane destruction of sheep and cattle
 - Animal Welfare Responsibilities – Consignors and Transporters
 - Animal Welfare Responsibilities – Saleyards
- [agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare](https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare)



For more information and to view the suite of animal welfare factsheets, scan the QR code, or visit: <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare/resources-and-publications>.

Important Disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

Copyright © State of Western Australia (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development), 2023.