



Fergus Ewing MSP
Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

5 February 2018

Dear Cabinet Secretary

We write to express our grave concern at statements reported in the Scottish media today to the effect that the Scottish Government would not take part in any UK-wide framework on agriculture that prevented live animal exports, following the UK's departure from the European Union.

We note your comment, reported in *The Scotsman* and elsewhere, that you "will not support anything that creates further challenges or difficulty for our farming sector or puts Scottish agriculture at a disadvantage. Any such move would potentially do substantial harm to our quality livestock sector, not least farming in the Western Isles, Shetland and Orkney, as well as trade with Northern Ireland."¹

Across Europe, the long-distance transport of live animals destined for slaughter has long been recognised as one of the most serious, and most intractable, farm animal welfare problems. There is a wealth of scientific and veterinary evidence that long journeys impose stress on the animals involved, and every journey from Scotland to a place of slaughter overseas is inevitably a lengthy one. Once the animals have left Scotland, those previously responsible for their welfare are powerless to protect them from the sort of risks that are still frequently reported: overstocking, failure to control temperatures, insufficient border checks, insufficient supply of water, and failure to provide adequate rest periods. Animals give birth on board lorries, suffer injuries and die.

Furthermore, conditions at abattoirs overseas cannot be guaranteed to meet Scottish animal welfare standards and, again, there are many reports of appalling cruelty and suffering. Many of the sheep exported from Scotland are sent to France, where inhumane and illegal slaughter practices in slaughterhouses have been revealed; a report by a committee of the Assemblée Nationale has confirmed the existence of serious welfare problems in French abattoirs.

OneKind asks you to reconsider your position and to re-focus Scottish Government resources on supporting improved facilities within Scotland, rather than the unsustainable and inhumane trade in live animals for slaughter. This would be consistent with the approach proposed in the *Scottish Sheep Sector Review: A pathway to a profitable future: a vision for the future of the Scottish sheep*

¹ <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/brexit-scotland-uk-trade-war-looms-over-livestock-exports-1-4682590>

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*industry*², a publication produced for the Scottish Government in 2016 by a short-life industry group comprising representatives from the supply chain.

The chapter entitled *Increasing Sheep Slaughtering in Scotland* opens as follows:

“It is disappointing that around half of the lambs produced in Scotland that are slaughtered each year are slaughtered outside Scotland and that nearly all the cull ewes from the Scottish flock are exported live to abattoirs outside Scotland. However, it is recognised that existing plants have capacity to handle significantly more sheep than they currently do. The greatest benefit to the wider Scottish economy would come through having a greater quantity of added-value sheep meat processing in Scotland. Breaking down carcasses would create jobs and greater revenue for the food sector in Scotland as well as increasing the value of exports.”

We draw your attention in particular to the following statement:

“By slaughtering animals closer to their place of production, there are additional benefits to be gained in the form of improved animal welfare, lower transport carbon emissions and lower transport costs. The scale of the challenge of increasing the volume of added-value activity in Scotland cannot be underestimated and may require some far-reaching innovation and commitment – through, for example, a farmer-owned venture or much closer co-operation between links in the supply chain.”

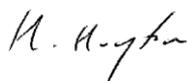
It appears to us, therefore, that the industry would be receptive to ending the live export trade provided the necessary support in other areas is available. Indeed, we are unaware of any evidence that a UK-wide ban on the export of live animals outside of the UK would result in “substantial harm”.

We would also refer you to the report *Brexit: Getting the Best Deal for Animals*³, recently published by the UK Centre for Animal Law and Wildlife and Countryside Link, and supported by 41 of the UK’s best-known animal welfare organisations. The report identifies a ban on live exports after Brexit as one of the ten most important priorities for maintaining and improving the welfare of the UK’s animals.

We suggest that the Scottish Government’s position, as stated today, is neither ethical nor justifiable and that the Scottish public will be dismayed to see recent progress on some animal welfare issues undermined.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Harry Huyton, Director, OneKind

² <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00504964.pdf>

³ <http://www.alaw.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Brexit-Getting-the-Best-Deal-for-Animals-Full-Report.pdf>