

Nightmare comes true for Romanian sheep exported to Persian Gulf



Photo: © Animals International

Animal protection organisations are calling for infringement proceedings against Romania, which allowed 66,000 sheep to be exported to the Persian Gulf in the middle of summer, despite the EU Commission urging authorities not to allow the vessel to leave.

In a recent letter to Animals International, Romanian authorities claim they required a 20% reduction in stocking density to mitigate heat stress. But the organization's evidence, presented last week to the EU Commission, reveals that hundreds of sheep died by the time they reached their destinations, with an investigator describing the "piles of dead sheep" that were filmed at the unloading point in the Gulf. They also saw surviving sheep being "beaten" as they disembarked in temperatures of over 40°C. While the initial destination was Kuwait, the vessel made 5 stops in the Gulf, increasing the risks of suffering and death from heat stress. Animals were unloaded in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Dubai, Qatar and Oman.

Romania's daily reports were requested by the Commission after [Commissioner Andriukaitis's call on 10th July to Petre Daea](#), the Romanian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, to stop the cruel shipment was ignored. *"These reports cannot be true. The vessel is a shipwreck that will not be allowed in Australia after the end of this year for being unable to have enough ventilation and access to animals. Even a single sheep on an empty deck will suffer severe heat stress once the temperature and humidity rises on the ship. The ship's ventilation system is not able to reduce the heat and humidity below the ambient temperature,*

and in fact the temperature and humidity in the sheep pens will regularly be between 2 and 6 degrees higher than outside the ship. Even if stocking density was halved, the remaining sheep would still be subjected to unbearably high temperatures and would suffer heat stress during these months in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf,” said Gabriel Paun, EU Director of Animals International.

According to the Romanian authorities, this was just the first shipment¹. Over one million² sheep are planned to be exported this year alone to the Gulf, in addition to a further one million animals to be sent to Jordan and Libya from Romania. Such journeys see heat and humidity combinations reach levels that cause heat stroke, resulting in sheep literally cooking alive in the holds of vessels.

“It is clear that sheep have suffered terribly throughout this entire journey, and that’s before we even mention the routine abuse and fully conscious slaughter they are subjected to when they arrive at their destinations,” said Gabriel Paun. *“These sheep come from the green meadows and high mountains of the Romanian countryside, and the contrast in how they are treated in the live export trade is unimaginable.”*

There is one light at the end of the tunnel: a proposed law by the Romanian Parliament aims to follow the positive example of Australia and prohibit the sea transport of livestock during the summer months, which would make it the first EU Member State to have such regulations. But Animals International says that even if the law is rushed through in September, it won’t necessarily mean that no more sheep undergo such journeys in the future, as exporters have their eye on at least three other European countries as sources of animals.

Eurogroup for Animals and Animals International had a meeting with the EU Commission last week, during which they presented some of the distressing footage from the Middle East. Both organisations are calling on the Commission to start infringement proceedings against Romania.

CONTACT

Vienna Leigh

Senior Communications Officer

v.leigh@eurogroupforanimals.org

Tel: +32 (0)2 207 77 15

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<https://www.madr.ro/comunicare/4958-primele-rezultate-ale-unei-colaborari-de-durata-privind-exportul-de-ovine-in-golf.html>

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<https://www.madr.ro/comunicare/5002-schimburi-comerciale-in-domeniul-agroalimentar-cu-republica-iran-in-remarcabil-progres.html>