

Background Briefing

Live export from Romania to the Middle East, 2019

On 11 July 2019 the large Kuwaiti-owned and operated livestock vessel, the *Al Shuwaikh*, arrived for the first time in Europe, at the Port Mida in Romania to export up to 66,000 Romanian sheep to Arabian Gulf destinations. The exporter was the Kuwaiti company, *Livestock Transport & Trading Co K.S.C.* (“KLTT”). The EU Commissioner had [urged Romanian authorities to stop this shipment](#) as the welfare of the animals could not be guaranteed.

KLTT was taking the unusual step of sending the vessel to Romania to pick up thousands of sheep and take them to Kuwait and other Gulf countries (Qatar and UAE) for the impending “Festival of Sacrifice” which took place in mid-August 2019. KLTT was sourcing Romanian sheep to “fill the gap” in supply of sheep because Australia banned voyages during this time of year due to the extreme heat and humidity conditions that prevail during such voyages enroute to the Middle East. Before approaching Romania, KLTT had tried to fill the gap in sheep supply by going to South Africa – where they were unsuccessful in exporting South African sheep due to similar heat-related concerns by the South African authorities.

KLTT has been a major exporter of Australian sheep and has been responsible for the onboard deaths of over 1 million sheep in past decades. [The vision of Australian sheep suffering and dying of heat stress](#) on a ship operated by KLTT created outrage across every sector of Australia last year and led to major regulatory reforms – including the banning of the trade during the Middle East summer months. Animals Australia/International had received this extensive vision from an on-board navigation officer. The footage was taken on board five live export shipments from Australia to the Middle East between May and November 2017. On one of those shipments, over 2400 sheep ‘cooked alive’. KLTT was the fleet manager and importer for all five voyages.

Furthermore, it is to note that KLTT has to secure new clients as the vessel *Al Shuwaikh* is a double-tiered ship with low ventilation which will be [banned from being used in the Australian trade by the end of 2019](#). Such vessels have serious welfare implications due to difficulty in accessing sheep in pens and low air flow.

Heat stress

During voyages to the Middle East and in countries in the Persian Gulf at this time of year, high heat and humidity combinations regularly reach and endure at levels that cause heat stress and heat stroke, resulting in sheep literally ‘cooking alive’ in their pens on vessels and then after arrival. Meteorological data on Middle East weather patterns confirm the dangerous and expected typical heat and humidity conditions for animals in the region during the months of this voyage - July and early August.

Conditions in importing countries

Romanian sheep are exported to countries where laws do not protect them from extreme cruelty and in some cases, where no animal protection laws exist at all. In Kuwait and the Gulf countries specifically, the common practice is for the sheep to be bought from livestock markets and then trussed and dragged into car boots in the scorching heat to be taken for home slaughter. Alternatively, the sheep are slaughtered on cement blocks or dirt

floors in chaotic street and livestock markets, or in abattoirs. The animals are not stunned prior to slaughter, so most exported animals suffer through the pain and distress of having their throats cut while fully conscious. This applies all over Middle East destinations – regardless of whether the slaughter is at a slaughterhouse, livestock market or private home. Many slaughter-men are inexperienced, and this results in the animals being stabbed and cut multiple times. The scale of this suffering will only intensify across the “Festival of Sacrifice” period.

Romanian animals were not only condemned to these handling and slaughter practices – they were also exposed to the extreme heat and humidity on the ground in these regions. At the time of writing to the Romanian authorities, Kuwait had already recorded [52.2 degrees Celsius](#), the highest temperature in the world for 2019. The highest ever temperature recorded in Kuwait was 54.0 °C (129.2 °F) at Mitribah on 21 July, 2016 which is the [highest temperature ever reliably recorded on Earth](#). This extreme heat applies across the [region generally](#).

Breaches of Romanian law, EU law and OIE standards during and beyond live sheep export to the Middle East (2019)

1. Cruel handling while loading

Animals International obtained evidence of Romanian sheep being kicked, beaten, dragged by horns and legs while being loaded on the vessel Al Shuwaikh on 12 August at Midia Port - this kind of treatment is in clear contradiction to Romanian and EU law.

2. Transport during extreme heat

Temperatures in countries along the journey of the vessel Al Shuwaikh from Romania to Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman were reaching from 30 – 44°C once passing the Suez Channel, Egypt. According to EU law this journey should have been never approved as during those temperatures animal welfare cannot be guaranteed.

At the arrival of Al Shuwaikh at ports in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates temperatures have been above 35°C. Animals International documented the transport of Romanian sheep after their arrival in importing countries, when temperatures exceeded the legal limit for road transport, on trucks in breach with EU law. Indeed, animals were loaded on trucks not provided with any roof/sun protection and ventilation systems. This is a clear violation to the EU law that states that animals should never be transported if inside temperature exceeds 30°C. Exported animals are protected by EU law until they reach the final destination in importing countries (where they must be accommodated for at least 48 hours prior to the time of departure; or slaughtered).

Evidence from Animals International shows the suffering and deaths of Romanian exported sheep after arrival in the feedlot in Qatar, where temperatures reached from 33 to 44°C.

3. Cruel handling and transport

Animals International visited various livestock markets in the Middle East where Romanian sheep were sold. The animals were forcefully dragged by horns and legs, lifted by grabbing their fleece and transported in car boots with no air circulation, despite the searing temperatures. In addition to this, Animals International filmed the routine fully conscious slaughter of Romanian exported sheep in Jordan – who were shipped to the country by another

export company. All animals suffered a painful and prolonged death. Sheep were handled roughly, dragged onto the slaughter floor and turned onto their backs then killed through multiple throat cuts – all this occurring in front of other animals. Romania and the importing countries are signatories to the OIE standards – and these standards have been blatantly breached. Romania and the importing countries are signatories to the OIE standards – and these standards have been blatantly breached.

Summary of Particulars of the Voyage of the vessel Al Shuwaikh

The Vessel arrived in Midia Port, Romania Harbour, on 11 July 2019, at approximately 09:30 AM.

The Vessel commenced loading on 12 July 2019. 66,000 Romanian sheep were loaded onto the Vessel.

The Vessel departed Midia Port on 14 July 2019 at approximately 19:50 PM. The Vessel then made the following Port visits where it discharged Romanian sheep:

1. **SAUDI ARABIA:** Arrived in Jeddah on 21 July 2019

Temperatures - Jeddah ¹ : 21 July 2019: day: 40°C, night: 33°C
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2. **DUBAI:** Arrived in Jebel Ali on 29 July 2019

Temperatures – Dubai, UAE ² : 29 July 2019: day: 44°C, night: 36°C
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3. **KUWAIT:** Arrived in Kuwait on 1 August 2019

Temperatures – Kuwait City, Kuwait ³ : 1 Aug 2019: day: 43 °C, night: 35 °C

4. **QATAR:** Arrived in Hamad on 3 August 2019

Temperatures – Al Wakrah, Qatar ⁴ : 3 Aug 2019: day: 42°C, night: 32°C
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5. **OMAN:** Arrived in Muscat on 6 August 2019

Temperatures – Muscat, Oman ⁵ : 6 Aug 2019: day: 36°C, night: 30°C
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¹ Source: <https://www.accuweather.com/en/sa/jeddah/299429/july-weather/299429> 21 July 2019

² Source: <https://www.accuweather.com/en/ae/dubai/323091/july-weather/323091> 29 July 2019

³ Source: <https://www.worldweatheronline.com/kuwait-city-weather-history/al-kuwayt/kw.aspx> 2 Aug 2019

⁴ Source: <https://www.worldweatheronline.com/al-wakrah-weather-history/al-wakrah-municipality/qa.aspx> 15 Aug 2019

⁵ Source: <https://www.accuweather.com/en/om/muscat/258638/month/258638?monyr=8/01/2019> 12 Aug 2019