

EFFECT OF DISTANCE OF TRUCKING ON FEEDING BEHAVIOUR AND LIVEWEIGHT CHANGE OF SHEEP DURING PRESHIPPING FEEDLOTING

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Failure to eat both in the **feedlot** and on ship is one of the major threats to the live sheep trade. Early work by A. Kelly (unpublished data) indicated that distance travelled to **feedlot** had an adverse effect on ship board deaths. This experiment was to examine the distance of trucking to the assembly **feedlot** as a factor influencing feeding behaviour in the **feedlot** phase of the live sheep export trade.

A total of 1200 sheep were obtained from 4 different sources. On arrival sheep from each source were tagged and randomly allocated to 6 **feedlot** pens. Results from 168 sheep per pen (42/source) were analysed. On completion of tagging and allocation, half of each experimental group (pen x source) was sent on a 540 km trucking trip overnight. The others were held in the **feedlot** overnight and were loaded on and off the same trucks when the transported groups had been off loaded. Twelve-hour fasted weights were taken on day 0, day 1 (post trucking) and day 7 of the experiment. Sheep were fed 1 kg of hay on days 1 and 2. Shipping pellets were then fed at 1 kg per head per day for the rest of the experiment. Paint-soaked bars above the troughs were used on 2 occasions (days 5 and 7) to measure feeding behaviour. Paint marks were scored using a 4 point scale ranging from 0 for unmarked (not feeding) sheep to 3 for heavily marked sheep. Feeding success was measured by an index derived from the sum of the paint-mark scores (Table 1).

Table 1. Effect of travelling on the number of sheep feeding

Feeding index	Travelled	Not travelled
0 (no feeding)	22	26
1-2 (minimal intake)	90	102
3-4 (normal feeding)	217	187
5-6 (heavy feeding)	179	186
$\chi^2 = 3.4$ ($P > 0.05$)		

An analysis of variance was carried out on weight change in the **feedlot** and it showed that there was no disadvantage due to the extra distance trucked.

We concluded that the length of distance travelled did not have any effect on feeding habits or liveweight change of sheep in **feedlots** in this case.