



Australian Government

**Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**

Roles and responsibilities of accredited veterinarians

Live Animal Export Branch

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Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601

Telephone 1800 900 090

Web [agriculture.gov.au](https://www.agriculture.gov.au)

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction..... | 4 |
| Pre-export operations | 5 |
| Licenced exporters..... | 5 |
| Pre-export AAVs..... | 6 |
| Registered establishment occupiers (exports by sea) | 7 |
| Approved premises (exports by air) | 7 |
| Regional veterinary officers..... | 8 |
| Shipboard operations | 10 |
| Licenced exporter | 10 |
| Shipboard AAVs | 11 |
| Accredited stockperson | 12 |
| Master of the vessel | 13 |
| Independent observers (observers) | 14 |
| Records..... | 16 |
| Conflicts of interest | 16 |
| Activities for the approved export program (AEP) | 16 |
| Identification of livestock | 17 |
| Pre-export isolation or quarantine | 17 |
| Reports..... | 17 |
| Related material..... | 18 |
| Version control..... | 18 |

Introduction

Accredited veterinarians (AAVs) have specific roles and responsibilities in the export of livestock. This includes completing export operations in approved export programs (AEP):

- prior to export and/or
- on board livestock vessels.

An AAV is a veterinarian accredited [under our regulatory framework](#). AAVs ensure:

- importing country requirements are met
- the [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock \(ASEL\)](#) requirements are met
- the health and welfare of livestock before and during export.

Other export supply chain members also have specific roles and responsibilities in relation to an AAV's role. This includes:

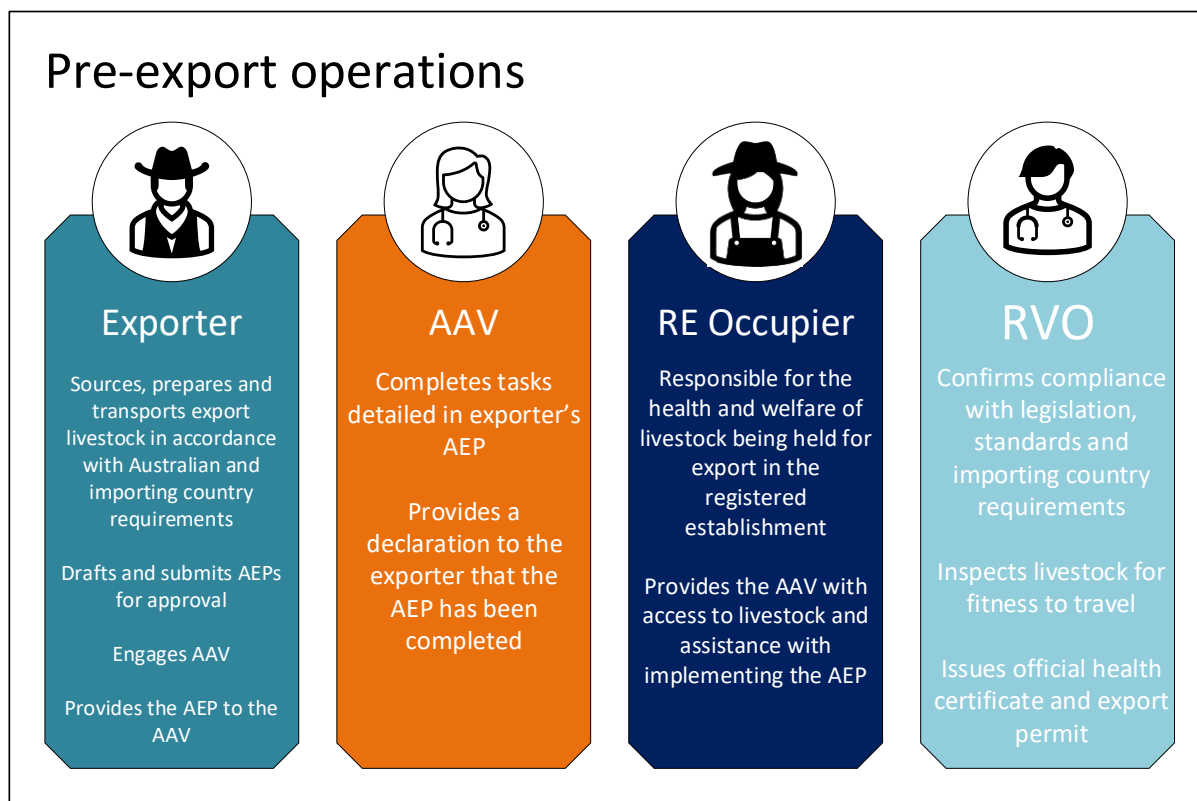
- [livestock exporters](#)
- [registered establishment \(RE\) occupiers](#)
- accredited stockpersons
- [independent observers \(observers\)](#)
- our regional veterinary officers (RVOs).

[Our regulatory framework](#) contains requirements for personnel in the livestock export supply chain.

Pre-export operations

AAVs, exporters, RE occupiers and RVOs all have an important role to play in pre-export operations.

Figure 1: Pre-export operations personnel key responsibilities in relation to AAVs



Licensed exporters

Role

Licensed exporters ensure livestock are sourced, prepared, transported, and exported in accordance [with our regulatory framework](#). They must perform their role as per their:

- [approved arrangement](#)
- operations manual for [small and infrequent exporters](#)
- any conditions on their licence
- any conditions on the consignment.

Responsibilities in relation to AAVs

A livestock exporter with an approved arrangement must have an AEP. An AEP describes the activities that the AAV must perform.

AEPs are specific to the components of a consignment, including the:

- destination market
- species of livestock

- class of livestock.

Only activities that an AAV must complete should be in an AEP. This may include meeting importing country requirements or ASEL.

An exporter must engage an AAV to perform the tasks in the AEP. It is the exporter's responsibility to give the AEP to the AAV before any treatments or procedures commence.

An exporter may also engage an AAV to undertake activities contained in their Standard Export Plan (SEP). Pre-export activities that do not require an AAV, but that an AAV could undertake as a registered veterinarian, will be in a SEP.

For more information on AEPs and SEPs see our [approved arrangements guidelines](#).

Pre-export AAVs

Role

Pre-export AAVs are private veterinarians registered in Australia and accredited by the department.

Pre-export AAVs:

- examine, inspect, treat and test livestock in accordance with the importing country requirements
- examine and inspect livestock for signs of disease and fitness to travel in accordance with ASEL and export legislation.

Responsibilities

An exporter engages an AAV to complete the tasks contained in their AEP.

Before commencing any export operations, an AAV should receive a copy of the relevant section of the exporter's AEP from the exporter. AEPs are specific to the components of a consignment, including the destination market, class and species of livestock.

Tasks in the AEP may include:

- monitoring the health and welfare of animals
- examining, inspecting, testing and/or treating eligible livestock after the livestock have entered pre-export isolation or quarantine
- examining, inspecting, testing and/or treating eligible livestock as per the importing country requirements
- examining and inspecting livestock to evaluate for signs of disease and fitness to travel in accordance with ASEL and export legislation.
- making a declaration upon the completion of the AEP.

[ASEL](#) sets out health and welfare standards for the export of livestock. AAVs must be familiar with all the requirements under ASEL, including the [rejection criteria guidelines](#). The guidelines provide further information to encourage consistent application of the criteria.

The AAV must declare that the activities listed in the AEP have been completed as described. It is important to note that this is not the official certification of the livestock for export.

An exporter may contract or employ an AAV to perform tasks in a SEP. These tasks do not require an AAV. Rather, the AAV would perform the tasks in their capacity as a registered veterinarian.

Examples include procedures that:

- need to be undertaken before livestock enter an RE or approved premises
- the exporter has chosen not to include them in their AEP
- the importing country has not specified who should complete them.

In addition to any record keeping requirements as a registered veterinarian, AAVs must comply with the record keeping requirements in [our regulatory framework](#). See further information on [record keeping requirements](#).

Registered establishment occupiers (exports by sea)

Role

RE occupiers manage day-to-day export operations carried out at the RE.

Responsibilities in relation to AAVs

REs prepare livestock for export by sea under our regulatory framework.

An RE operates in accordance with its approved [RE operations manual](#). There may also be conditions placed on the registration, including the number and type of livestock they can hold for export. As soon as practicable before the consignment arrives at the RE, the exporter provides specific information to the RE occupier, which include:

- consignment details
- any relevant Australian or importing country requirements.

An AAV undertakes activities in the RE in accordance with the AEP. The RE occupier must provide reasonable assistance to an AAV while they are carrying out export operations. This may include:

- providing access to the livestock and livestock handling facilities
- assistance with movement of livestock at the establishment
- identifying animals that need veterinary assessment and treatment
- separating rejected livestock that are ineligible for export at the direction of the AAV.

Approved premises (exports by air)

Role

Occupiers of approved premises manage the day-to-day export operations carried out at the approved premises.

Responsibilities in relation to AAVs

Approved premises prepare livestock for export by air where pre-export isolation or quarantine is required. They are approved under our regulatory framework for pre-export quarantine or isolation. Approval of a premises is on a consignment-by-consignment basis.

As soon as practicable before the consignment arrives at the approved premises, the exporter provides specific information to the occupier of the approved premises, which include:

- the consignment details
- any relevant Australian or importing country requirements.

An AAV undertakes activities in the approved premises in accordance with the AEP. The approved premises occupier must provide reasonable assistance and/or access to an AAV while they are carrying out export operations similar to that provided by RE occupiers.

Regional veterinary officers

Role

Our RVOs are government veterinarians. A RVO's role is to inspect livestock and documentation to verify the exporter's compliance with:

- export legislation
- ASEL
- importing country requirements.

The RVO's inspection of livestock and documentation provides the basis of certification to issue the official health certificate and export permit.

Responsibilities in relation to AAVs

For each consignment, the RVO inspects some or all livestock in the consignment. The number of animals inspected will depend on a number of factors, including the destination market, species and previous performance of the exporter. If the consignment is being prepared at multiple premises, the RVO will undertake inspections at all premises. RVOs may also choose to inspect livestock:

- while they are being loaded for export at the port or airport
- at any point in the export supply chain.

RVOs will also verify documentation to ensure exporters have complied with:

- their approved arrangement
- their AEP
- their export licence
- export legislation
- ASEL
- importing country requirements.

The documents required differ depending on the export market and the exporter's previous performance. It is important that the RVO receives the documents required for the export permit and health certificate as soon as possible to assist them in performing their role. See [more information on document requirements](#).

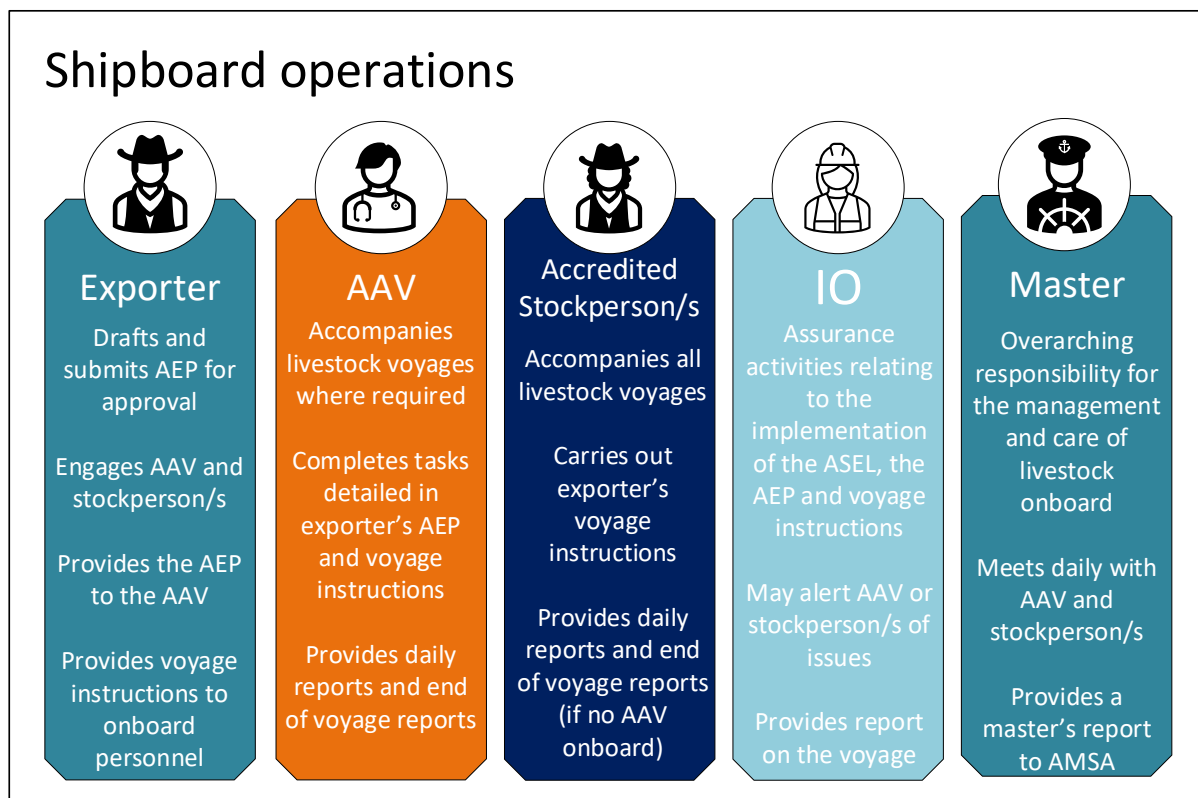
If the RVO is not confident that requirements have been met, including tasks in the AEP, they may choose to increase the sample size or inspect all animals in the consignment. If a proportion of animals do not meet requirements, the RVO will immediately refer the matter to a senior officer. The consignment may be rejected for export and/or the department may investigate further.

If the livestock and documentation comply with all requirements, the RVO will issue the official health certificate and export permit.

Shipboard operations

AAVs, accredited stockpersons, the vessel master and crew work together to maintain the health and welfare of the animals on board during the voyage and until completion of unloading in the importing country.

Figure 2: Shipboard operations personnel key responsibilities in relation to the AAV



Licensed exporter

Role

A licensed exporter's role in exporting livestock by sea is to:

- ensure the loading and transport of livestock is in accordance with relevant Australian and importing country requirements
- ensure the health and welfare of livestock on the voyage
- monitor the voyage and provide assistance where required
- submitting daily and end of voyage reports within required timeframes [under ASEL](#)
- notify the department of relevant incidents within required timeframes [under ASEL](#).

Responsibilities in relation to AAVs

Exporters engage or employ AAVs and accredited stockpersons. They may also charter or sub-charter the vessel. It is through these mechanisms that the exporter ensures they meet Australian regulations and importing country requirements.

Exporters must instruct the on-board personnel to manage livestock in accordance with their:

- approved arrangement (or operations manual for small and infrequent exporters)
- AEP
- any conditions on the exporter's licence or the consignment.

The exporter must provide the AAV with:

- the shipboard AEP
- instructions for the management of the consignment during the voyage.

The exporter must notify the department as soon as possible and within 12 hours of a notifiable incident occurring on board the vessel. [ASEL](#) defines a notifiable incident, this includes but is not limited to:

- disablement of a vessel
- the voyage reaches the notifiable mortality level
- an overseas port or importing country government rejects the livestock.
- diagnosis or reasonable suspicion of an emergency animal disease
- any other incident that has the potential to cause a serious adverse effect on animal health or welfare.

Shipboard AAVs

When does an AAV accompany a voyage?

An AAV must accompany consignments where required by [our regulatory framework](#).

An exporter may also contract or employ an AAV to accompany a consignment where they feel it is necessary outside of these requirements including for commercial reasons.

Unless the exporter has certain approvals [under ASEL](#), an AAV must accompany consignments:

- that are expected to be extended long-haul voyages (31 days or more)
- with pregnant livestock
- where the vessel is travelling to or through the Middle East
- where the vessel is new or has had a significant change or re-fit
- if the consignment is the first for the exporter
- for any other voyage when required by the department.

Role

Shipboard AAVs are private veterinarians registered in Australia and accredited by the department. AAVs must be Australian citizens to perform shipboard activities. The shipboard AAV has 2 main roles:

- to deliver veterinary services during livestock export voyages

- to keep and provide daily and end-of-voyage reports to the department in accordance with the ASEL, and any directions given by the department.

Shipboard AAVs provide important professional oversight to deliver confidence that health and welfare standards are met. This provides confidence to stakeholders including the:

- Australian government
- exporter
- authority of the importing country
- Australian public.

Responsibilities

Shipboard AAVs must implement:

- the activities contained in an exporter's AEP
- any voyage instructions provided by the exporter.

The AAV is on board to ensure livestock are transported, managed and handled in accordance with relevant Australian and importing country requirements. They also ensure animal health and welfare throughout the voyage.

An AAV should ensure they receive a copy of the shipboard AEP and any other voyage instructions from the exporter. Requirements under shipboard AEPs and on-board instructions may differ depending on the:

- importing country requirements
- species of livestock
- class of livestock.

The AAV and/or accredited stockperson must remain with the consignment until the last animal has been unloaded at the final port of disembarkation.

Daily and end-of-voyage reports must include all information required by the [LIVEXCollect](#) template including:

- consignment conditions on board from loading to disembarkation
- details on livestock health, welfare and mortalities during the voyage.

Accredited stockperson

Role

Accredited stockpersons ensure livestock are managed in accordance with the:

- ASEL
- exporter's voyage instructions.

In the absence of an AAV, the accredited stockperson is to keep and provide daily and end-of-voyage reports to the department.

Responsibilities in relation to AAVs

The Australian Livestock Export Corporation Ltd (LiveCorp) accredit stockpersons. Accredited stockpersons manage livestock on vessels. Accreditation is gained by completing the [Shipboard Stockperson Training Course](#).

Accredited stockpersons accompany all consignments on a vessel, until the last animal has been unloaded at the final port of disembarkation. There may be multiple accredited stockpersons on board for some voyages.

The exporter employs or contracts accredited stockpersons.

Voyage instructions will cover but are not limited to:

- handling and management requirements for each class of livestock on board
- quantity, type and frequency of feed and water to be provided (if not *ad libitum*)
- pen and deck cleaning and maintenance (including bedding requirements)
- general management requirements (including inspections, disease investigation and treatment)
- authority to humanely destroy any animal that is seriously ill or injured.

If an AAV is not onboard, the accredited stockperson must provide daily and end-of-voyage reports to the department. These include information on the health, welfare and mortalities of livestock throughout the voyage. An accredited stockperson provides these reports through [LIVEXCollect](#).

Master of the vessel

Role

The master of a livestock vessel has an overriding obligation for the safety of the vessel and all those on board. The master provides a report upon voyage completion to the department and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

Responsibilities in relation to AAVs

For livestock export voyages the vessel master has an overarching responsibility for the management and care of the livestock.

ASEL requires a daily meeting to discuss animal health and welfare issues between the:

- master (or representative)
- accredited stockperson
- AAV, if they are on board.

The master's report must be provided to department and AMSA at the completion of the voyage. The report includes the ship and voyage details, loading and discharge details, daily mortality rates and environmental conditions for the voyage.

The working relationship between the crew (who report to the master), the AAV and the accredited stockpersons is critical to the successful management of animal health and welfare during the

voyage, particularly as the AAV and stockpersons are reliant on the competency of the crew to assist with monitoring, feeding, providing water and identifying animals needing care.

Independent observers (observers)

Role

Observers undertake assurance activities for the voyage including monitoring, reviewing and/or auditing. They verify and report on the:

- implementation of individual exporter arrangements (AEP and voyage instructions)
- exporter's effectiveness at ensuring the management of animal health and welfare during the voyage.

Responsibilities in relation to AAVs

An observer will undertake assurance activities of AAVs and exporters under their AEP or voyage instructions during the voyage. These may include:

- monitoring
- reviewing
- and/or auditing.

Observers do not take an active role in animal management during the voyage. They observe and document the activities:

- in an exporter's AEP or voyage instructions as undertaken by the AAV or accredited stockperson respectively
- undertaken to ensure the health and welfare of livestock for each livestock export consignment.

Observer day-to-day tasks include monitoring and reporting on activities undertaken on board including:

- loading operations
- pen space allocation
- access to feed and water
- environmental conditions
- livestock health and welfare
- discharge operations.

The observer has the power to issue a written direction to AAVs in specific circumstances where the AAV is observed to be deficient in undertaking the activities specified in an exporter's AEP.

As part of their daily observations, the observer may alert the AAV or accredited stockperson of minor findings to improve animal health and welfare outcomes. These may include:

- finding a lame or sick animal
- faeces in water or feed troughs

- varied environmental conditions between decks.

Once the observer has alerted the AAV or accredited stockperson, the observer does not have any responsibility to suggest or implement any remedial action. The observer does have a role in monitoring implementation or effectiveness of actions taken. The observer will notify the department, which may result in a direction to the exporter being issued, where:

- minor findings are not addressed
- there are impacts on animal welfare outcomes
- the observer notices non-compliance with ASEL or exporter arrangements.

On return to Australia, the observer provides the department with a report on the voyage, including any photographs and video records. The department publishes a [summary of the observer's report](#).

Records

AAVs must keep records in accordance with [our regulatory framework](#).

An AAV must keep these records for a minimum of 2 years from the date the livestock leave the RE or other premises where livestock were prepared for export.

AAVs must keep any records, including copies of any documents, that they are required to keep in accordance with [our regulatory framework](#).

This includes records and documents that are given to, or generated by, them:

- in connection with the export operations
- in the course of carrying out the export operations.

The department may request these documents at any time. The department may also request documents as part of compliance activities or audit functions.

Conflicts of interest

AAVs should keep evidence of any interest (pecuniary or otherwise) that has been provided to the department in writing. These must be provided:

- on initial accreditation application
- if any new interests occur once accredited
- if any current interests change.

Activities for the approved export program (AEP)

AAVs must keep records for any inspections, examinations, testing or treatments of livestock they administer or supervise including:

- details of any examination, inspection, testing or treatment
- dates and location of any examination, inspection, testing or treatment
- the results of any testing undertaken
- the name of the active constituent in a drug or product
- the amount of drug or product that was administered
- details of how any samples were collected, handled, stored and transported
- a copy of all invoices received upon the purchase of any drugs or products to treat livestock for export. AAVs must also keep records of where and how any drugs and products were obtained if the AAV did not make the purchase themselves.

AAVs must also keep a record that they have received a copy of the relevant parts of the AEP from the exporter for the particular consignment related to the activities to be undertaken by that AAV.

Identification of livestock

There must be sufficient information to identify the livestock that have been examined, inspected, tested, treated, or prepared for export.

The level of identification depends on the specific AEP and may include:

- Australian requirements
- importing country requirements.

Laboratory test results must link to the:

- property from where the animal was sampled
- National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) tag number of the animal, where state or territory legislation requires individual identification.

Pre-export isolation or quarantine

AAVs must keep records of any pre-export quarantine or isolation of livestock including the:

- length and location of the quarantine or isolation
- conditions of the quarantine or isolation.

Reports

Shipboard AAVs must keep evidence they have provided all reports to the department within required timeframes. These include:

- daily reports
- end-of-voyage reports.

There is more information on reporting timeframes [in ASEL](#).

Related material

- [Accredited veterinarians](#)
- [Approved arrangement guidelines for the export of livestock](#)
- [Approved export program guidelines for the export of livestock](#)
- [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock \(ASEL\)](#)
- [Exporting a livestock consignment](#)
- [Identification and management of material interests for AAVs](#)
- [Regulating live animal exports](#)
- [Rejection criteria guidelines](#)
- [Voyage reporting requirements under ASEL](#)

Version control

| Version | Date of issue | Author | Reason for change |
|---------|---------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1.0 | March 2022 | Live Animal Export Branch | First release. |
| 2.0 | November 2023 | Live Animal Export Branch | Updates to record keeping section of document and additional information to other sections to provide further clarity. Updates to department branding and document formatting in line with publishing requirements. |
| 2.1 | December 2023 | Live Animal Export Branch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inserted new record keeping requirements as per recent amendments to the Export Control (Animals) Rules 2021. • Updated document template, department branding and minor formatting, and legislative references. |
| 2.2 | February 2025 | Live Animal Export Branch | Inserted new record keeping requirements as per recent amendments to the Export Control (Animals) Rules 2021. |