

Submission
No 209

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF
KANGAROOS AND OTHER MACROPODS IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Organisation: LAV - LEGA ANTI VIVISIONE

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Rome, 21st April 2021

NSW KMP Inquiry – LAV (Italy)

Introduction of LAV

“A world where every animal has freedom, dignity, life”. This is the vision of the largest Italian animal rights organization.

Promotes and brings about a cultural change in the way we relate to other animals, with a view to achieving a lifestyle and making political choices based on respect for and solidarity towards all living beings, irrespective of their species. Puts a stop to any form of exploitation and suffering by asserting animals' rights and promoting the issuing and implementation of new laws.

Given that Italy is the main European importing country of kangaroo skins, in 2019 LAV began collaborating with an international network made up of Australian, European and American NGOs and has launched a national campaign to raise awareness among Italian companies on the exploitation and violence perpetrated against kangaroos in the context of the so-called "commercial hunting", obtaining a few months a "kangaroo-free" commitment by companies such as Diadora, Versace, Prada, Ferragamo.

Established in 1977, LAV brings together around 50,000 people (members and contributors) and has 66 local chapters.

Although our position is that commercial kangaroo hunting should be permanently banned for ethical reasons, for the objective and documented problems of Animal Welfare, the unhealthiness of the meat obtained from these animals and for the protection of the species, in the meantime we ask the Parliament of New South Wales to adopt the following recommendations.

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Relevant Terms of Reference

(e) current government policies and programs in regards to 'in pouch' and 'at foot joeys' given the high infant mortality rate of joeys and the unrecorded deaths of orphaned young

where females are killed,

Unacceptable welfare cost

(f) regulatory and compliance mechanisms to ensure that commercial and non-commercial killing of kangaroos and other macropods is undertaken according to the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and other relevant regulations and codes,

Transparency of population estimates

LAV (Italy), submission

The European Union is the largest single market for exported kangaroo products which include skins, meat, and pet food. In 2019, the amount of exported skins and meat that was exported to the EU was 235 tonnes and 2684 tonnes respectively (Table 1). Meat is 65% of the total meat export amount and 73% of the meat export value. The meat exports are particularly valuable to the kangaroo industry because kangaroos cannot be shot for skins only.

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The European market has a substantial impact on the commercial kill in NSW. In 2019, 561352 adult kangaroos were commercially killed in NSW. About 40%, or 224,541 kangaroos, are for the export market. Therefore the 65% of meat export to Europe represents roughly 135,000 kangaroos, or about 25%, of the commercial kill in NSW.

The European Union holds high standards for both the welfare and the conservation of wildlife both within the EU and from countries it imports from. As such, animal protection organizations will hold the EU responsible for maintaining these standards. We seek to address number of concerns regarding animal welfare and conservation in the current format of the NSW Kangaroo Management Plan.

Table 1. Kangaroo skins and meat exports for 2019 (Tynan 2021)

(a) Skins

Country of Destination	Gross Weight (Tonnes)	Value (FOB) (\$'000)
Turkey	1198.545	1118.204
Pakistan	1033.395	853.041
India	249.367	466.822
Germany	115.395	1608.149
Italy (includes Holy See and San Marino)	102.399	1621.46
Vietnam	79.885	8681.819
Japan	66.442	3129.331
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	50.739	653.681
Thailand	29.602	310.145
Haiti	20	21.406
Portugal	17.5	14.632
Bangladesh	12.225	12.225
United States of America	9.471	1173.166
Singapore	6.55	129.277
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	6.414	763.606
Mexico	6	93.526
Korea	3.925	360.193
Fiji	1.031	50.468
New Zealand	0.746	13.499
Vanuatu	0.185	14.394
Taiwan	0.118	11.241
Canada	0.09	27.893
United Kingdom	0.088	13.067
Switzerland (includes Liechtenstein)	0.013	8.745
Total	3010.125	21149.99

(b) Meat

Country of Destination	Gross Weight (Tonnes)	Value (FOB) (\$'000)
Belgium	774.517	5148.988
Germany	545.017	2779.966
Paupa New Guinea	455.21	1631.387
Netherlands	423.278	2903.146
Canada	146.509	513.043
Korea	75.723	230.264
Japan	62.243	378.155
United States	52.472	549.972
New Zealand	29.181	98.462
Solomon Islands	27.113	85.279

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Singapore	26.739	136.414
Switzerland	21.859	209.722
Spain	18.425	66.192
Indonesia	17.85	41.8
HongKong	7.36	70.77
Seychelles	0.514	5.432
Total	2684.01	14848.99

Welfare cost of harming dependent young

The current annual KMP reports record the number of adult kangaroos killed, both male and female percentages, but not the number of dependent young that are killed as collateral. The code of practice states that the dependent young will be disposed of humanely. Such an important welfare concern should be addressed and recorded transparently. It can only be assumed that there is no supervision in the field to record the actions of hunters on dependent young. Incidental reports from wildlife carers and independent reporting suggest that there is a grave problem.

The current code of practice requires decapitation and blow to the head (Agrifutures 2020), an unacceptable killing method. It is the same method used for killing Canadian Harp Seals, whose products have been banned in Europe and elsewhere. Furthermore, studies suggest that in many cases dependent kangaroo young escape, only to die a painful death of dehydration, predation, or starvation (Croft 2004, Sharp and Mcleod 2014). These outcomes are not acceptable for EU trade purposes.

Table 1: Summary of acceptable euthanasia methods for kangaroo and wallaby pouch young (Agrifutures 2020)

<i>Stage of development</i>	<i>Acceptable Method</i>	<i>Notes</i>
In pouch – unfurred <5cm length (including tail)	Decapitation or cervical dislocation	Using thumb and finger or sharp blade
In pouch – unfurred >5cm (including tail)	Decapitation	Using a sharp blade
In pouch – partially furred In pouch – furred Out of pouch – can be caught by harvester	Manually applied concussive blow to the head	The concussive blow must be conducted so that the joey's head is hit against a large solid surface that will not move or compress during the impact (e.g., the tray of a utility vehicle). Animals must not be hit against the utility rack or held upside down by the hindquarters or tail and hit.

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In 2019 there were 561,352 adult kangaroos killed but not percentage of males and females given, indicating a lack of transparency (Anon 2021). In 2018 some 467456



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kangaroos were killed at an average of 10% females (Anon 2020) females killed by the commercial harvest in NSW. An estimate based on the reproduction biology of female kangaroos (the Grey and Red kangaroos) suggests that 33,000 dependent young (see Ben-Ami, Boom et al. 2014) were either killed, or likely have died without protection and care of their mothers. None of these outcomes, the lack of transparency in 2021 quota report and the collateral harm of dependent young deaths, are legitimate for a food and skins-based wildlife industry supplying the EU.

Until recently the Kangaroo Industry and Australian trade representatives have asserted that the Code of Practice and guidelines for killing dependent young are endorsed by Australia's peak animal welfare body, the RSPCA Australia. In its website the RSPCA finds the killing of dependent young problematic (i.e. not humane) because of the difficulties of execution and supervision of the process in the field. It also does not support the commercial industry as a means of controlling kangaroo populations (RSPCA Australia 2020). It summarizes its position statement on the (commercial) killing of kangaroos and wallabies as follows:

“questions remain about the humaneness of kangaroo shooting and the basis for current government policies on the management and killing of kangaroos.”

Recent independent kangaroo processor efforts to implement a male only kill have been met with resistance by farmers (Ampt 2018, Mcleod and Hacker 2019). In fact, farmers have become so dissatisfied with this measure that new cluster fencing, supported by state subsidies, has been placed to minimize kangaroo presence in the QLD and now in western NSW. This creates additional welfare and conservation concern to all wildlife sharing space with kangaroos.

Recommendations:

- Females with dependent young should not be killed
- This should be mandated by the NSW KMP (and not independently by industry)
- All hunters should be supervised in the field, at the very least by body cameras

Welfare cost of harming adult kangaroos

Commercially killed kangaroos are meant to be killed by a single shot to the head with a high-powered rifle. The hunter must have passed a shooting proficiency test. Although the industry claims the accuracy is about 98%, this is a statistic that is hard to believe. The shooting occurs at night. Some shooters are fulltime professionals and expert marksmen, but many are not. This is particularly true in NSW which is encouraging non-professional shooters to take part in the commercial kill.

The unfortunate outcome is that many adult kangaroos are miss shot, either in the body, neck or jaw. An independent assessment of carcasses in chillers showed that up to 40% of kangaroos were not hit in the head (Ben-Ami 2009). Another independent assessment of carcass leftover in the field, over an 8 year period, by commercial industry hunters has shown that over 40% of heads collected where without entry points (Keightley, G. pers comm – data provided on request).

Importantly, there is no supervision in the field to determine whether a clean head shot was made. The industry reports that only head shot kangaroos are accepted for processing. Non-headshot kangaroos may be left in the field. Others that were shot in

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the neck or jaw are still brought in. The evidence of non-head shot is hidden by severing the head below the occipital joint in the neck (where the cut is unhindered), as was recorded by Des Sibraa , former Chief Food Safet Inspector for NSW (Ben-Ami 2009).

Recommendations:

- Only fully professional hunters should engage in the commercial kill
- On site regulation should include body cameras on commercial hunters

Unverifiable population estimates

As a primary consumer of kangaroo products, the EU has an obligation to independently ascertain that kangaroo populations are ecologically sustainable. However, it is impossible to assess sustainability independently, either by calculating kangaroo population numbers in the present nor comparing to historic estimates. This is because the Quota Reports of the NSW Kangaroo Management Plant fail to include the raw data from the surveys, the correction factors used at various times, the addition of new management zones and the mathematical models used to estimate populations on government websites (for example see Anon 2020, Anon 2021)

Recommendations:

- The NSW KMP Quota Reports should include raw data collected from surveys
- The NSW KMP Reports (and Quota Reports) should include long-term population trends correlated to changing correction factors and the addition of new management zones

Gianluca Felicetti
LAV's President

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