

Submission
No 32

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

Organisation: Eurogroup for Animals

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Submission on an inquiry into the health and wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods in New South Wales

Introduction

As the pan-European animal advocacy organisation, the primary focus of Eurogroup for Animals is to improve the well-being of as many animals as possible and defend animals' interests. We represent 73 non-governmental organisations from all over Europe and beyond.

The EU currently is Australia's main market for kangaroo exports, both for skins and hides and for meat products.

Kangaroo hunting evokes serious concerns related to animal welfare, conservation and food safety. With the following submission, we would like to present our point of view for the consideration of the NSW Upper House Portfolio Committee 7 - Planning and Environment Committee.

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,

Eurogroup for Animals cannot accept the current welfare cost

The position of Eurogroup for Animals

The EU currently is Australia's main market for kangaroo exports, both for skins and hides and for meat products. According to Australian data, the main importers of kangaroo meat for pet food and human consumption in the EU are Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and France.

The main importers of kangaroo skins, hides and leather are Italy and Germany, and to a smaller extent Austria, Czech Republic, Greece, Slovakia, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden and Croatia. As kangaroos cannot be shot for skins only, meat exports are particularly important to the kangaroo industry - and the European market has a substantial impact on the commercial kill in NSW. In 2019, 561,352 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.

In 2019, the amount of 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.

The European Union is recognised for the high welfare standards it imposes on both products produced on EU territory and in third countries. We would therefore wish to address concerns arising from 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
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 lack of records on collateral killing of dependent joeys within the current annual KMP is a symptom of an important animal welfare concern. As the code of practice states that dependent young must be disposed of humanely, there is clearly a need to address this issue - with no transparency as to the methods of this procedure and with reports from wildlife carers suggesting irregularities.

The current code of practices requires decapitation and blow to the head (Agrifutures 2020), which is a killing method deemed unacceptable. Products obtained by this cruel method have been banned in Europe and other territories - an example of which are products from Canadian Harp Seals. It must be mentioned that it is common that dependent joeys escape, which makes them vulnerable to predators and leads to a long and painful death resulting from starvation and dehydration (Croft 2004, Sharp and Mcleod 2014). There cannot be any reason to justify such cruel outcomes.

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.

A lack of transparency is evident while examining records of killed kangaroos, as in 2019 there were 561,352 adult kangaroos killed but the percentage of males and females was not provided (Anon 2021). Out of 467,456 kangaroos killed in 2018, an average of 10% were females hunted through commercial harvest activities 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. **These outcomes are unacceptable to Eurogroup for Animals on welfare grounds and cannot be tolerated as part of 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 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). The organisation 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 from 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.**

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 full time 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 were 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 kangaroos shot in the head are accepted for processing. Non-headshot kangaroos may be left in the field. Others that were shot in the neck or jaw are still brought in. The evidence of non-headshot 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 Safety Inspector for NSW (Ben-Ami 2009).

Recommendations

The commercial kangaroo hunt raises serious animal welfare, conservation and public health concerns. Kangaroos are shot at night, leading to non-lethal shots that can cause horrific injuries and a slow death if the animals escape. Due to impaired vision at night, shooters frequently kill females; moreover, shooting females is not banned by law. Young joeys left in the female pouch are then killed through blunt trauma to the head, such as swinging their heads against vehicles. At-foot joeys may be left in the field to suffer exposure to starvation and predation. Such practices are not only inherently cruel but also affect the welfare of surviving kangaroos by disrupting matrilineal lines and social structures.

Eurogroup for Animals calls on the Australian Government to end the cruel commercial hunting of kangaroos.

Please see more details about Eurogroup for Animals' position on commercial hunting of kangaroos [here](#).

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