

Australian sheep punched, stamped on and thrown: PETA

July 11 2014



Sheep graze in the bushfire-scarred mountainous terrain near the town of Coonabarabran in south-eastern Australia

Footage showing sheep being violently abused by shearers—including being punched in the face and hit with tools—was condemned Friday by Australia's Agriculture Minister as "exceptional and cruel".

The images, reportedly filmed in Australia by undercover investigators for the animal rights group PETA, showed shearers severely abusing animals in a country famed for its wool industry and exports.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals said the footage was shot at 19 contractor-run sheep shearing sheds in Australia between October 2013 and February 2014.

Shearers were recorded repeatedly beating sheep, stamping on their necks, throwing them and stitching wounds apparently without anaesthetic.

It was first reported by US television network NBC before the activist group released it online Thursday.

Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce said Friday that the video was shocking, but added that he wanted to know more about its source and how it was obtained.

"One of the questions I ask is with the up close shot of the man hitting the sheep, which is obviously exceptional and cruel and in many instances would be immediate dismissal, where exactly was the camera?" he told ABC radio.

"Did the person know that they were filmed? Were they actually part of the process? There are lots of questions that need to be asked."

PETA said it would not reveal where the footage was taken to protect its investigators.



Supporters of animal rights display a banner against abuse of animals in Sydney on November 11, 2012

The RSPCA animal charity said the abuse allegations were "serious" and it would be investigated for potential breaches of Australian [animal welfare](#) legislation.

WoolProducers Australia added in a statement it was "shocked and appalled by the footage" but that it was an isolated incident.

"We ask all woolgrowers to take a zero tolerance approach to poor animal welfare practice and take the necessary steps to ensure rare behaviour like this ends," WoolProducers Australia president Geoff Fiskien said.

In March, Australia resumed exporting [sheep](#) and cattle to Egypt after an

agreement with importers on animal welfare standards.

Live cattle exports from Australia to Egypt were suspended last year after [footage](#) released by Animals Australia of the graphic slaughter of an animal.

Australia's live cattle trade to Indonesia was also temporary halted in 2011 on cruelty concerns.

Support has grown in Australia for the introduction of "ag gag" laws, already in practice in the US, that would make it illegal for activists to secretly film practises on a farm and then broadcast it without alerting authorities.

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