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## Keeping COVID out of saleyards

The Cattle Council of Australia, Sheep Producers Australia and Wool Producers Australia are backing industry-wide steps to keep saleyards open while preventing the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus.

Saleyards are an essential part of the red meat supply chain and need to keep operating to assure the supply of high-quality meat both in Australia and overseas.

Cattle Council President Tony Hegarty said saleyard operators, agents, buyers, processors and producers had agreed to keep anyone out who doesn't need to be there.

"Only essential saleyard and agency staff, accredited agents and registered buyers with a true intention to purchase livestock should attend the sales in person," Mr Hegarty said.

"The wellbeing of our people and the community is our top priority as we face the coronavirus.

"Sales are going ahead but some could be delayed while new measures are put in place.

"We need to make sure our industry keeps running and we keep red meat in butcheries."

Sheep Producers Australia Chair Chris Mirams said the new restrictions would protect workers and ensure producers continued providing high-quality meat to consumers.

"Reducing the people at saleyards will reduce health risks for agents and buyers," Mr Mirams said.

"This means they can continue their essential role moving stock through the supply chain while maintaining the maximum level of buying competition

"Agriculture is an essential industry and all parts of the supply chain need to function so we can keep feeding our domestic and international customers."

Woolproducers Australia President Ed Storey said anyone without a legitimate reason to be at a saleyard will not be allowed in.

"There will be new systems put in place to make sure the new rules are followed," Mr Storey said.

"We are doing this to make sure we can still buy and sell animals and stay open for business, keeping the agricultural supply chains operating.

"If it is not necessary for you to be at the saleyards you shouldn't be there. Those that are there need to practice social distancing as best they can.

"The best way to get a feel for the market right now is go online or give your agent a call."

### **Media Contacts:**

Cattle Council: Robert Herrick, 0409 219 527

Sheep Producers Australia: Bonnie Skinner, 0412 472 710

Woolproducers Australia: Jo Hall, 0488 554 811