meat industry association

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PRESS RELEASE

IMPACT OF MAF VETS STRIKE ACTION

"The strike is by no means a total walkout by the veterinarians. Early indications are that across the country about two-thirds of the meat processing sector has been affected. The impact is greatest in the North Island." said Brian Lynch, Executive Director of the Meat Industry Association.

Mr Lynch had been asked to comment on the impact of the strike by MAF veterinarians which came into effect at midnight on Thursday 15 February.

"But even if the strike is not complete, it is causing major disruption. And the uncertainty about the outcome of last night's mediation is not helping matters.

"Already it's obvious that the recent daily slaughter figures of 110 thousand lambs,20 thousand sheep and ten thousand cattle cannot be maintained, with many of the vets absent. This will cut back the planned high season shipments to key markets in Asia. Europe, the Middle East and North America; at this time of the year the weekly shipments to those markets is normally around 9000 tonnes of beef and veal and 6000 tonnes of lamb and mutton ".

"The reduced processing capacity that's available will mean that farmers are going to miss out on the peak procurement prices. At this point in the season livestock sales would be expected to bring over 8 million dollars daily into rural communities".

" And companies have had no choice other than to withhold a sizeable amount of the 5 million daily wage bill for meat workers. The daily freight bill of $1.5 million for domestic and sea transport is also affected "

Asked about the impact of the strike on overseas markets, Mr Lynch said the injury caused took two forms. "The short-term damage is to the $22 million in daily sales of beef and sheepmeat in our major markets, if companies are unable to fulfil their contractural commitments. The longer-term damage is to New Zealand's hard-won international reputation as a reliable source of high quality meat products".

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