CENTER FOR A HUMANE ECONOMY



AUSTRALIA'S GLOBAL BUSHMEAT TRADE

A Report on the Commercial Kangaroo Meat Industry: Economics, Food Safety, and Animal Welfare Failures

October 2026

Authors:
Svetlana Feigin, Ph.D.
Jennifer Skiff
Tina Lawrence, B.Juris., LL.B.
Jim Keen, D.V.M., Ph.D.
Dr. Thomas Pool, D.V.M., M.P.H., Dipl. ACVPM
Kevin Chambers
Peter Hylands

©2026 Center for a Humane Economy. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

PRIMARY TAKEAWAYS 5

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE 6

INTRODUCTION 6

1.2 Background: The Natural History of Macropods 7

2. INDUSTRY OVERVIEW AND REGULATION 9

2.1 Commercial Quotas vs. Actual Take 9

3. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS 11

3.1 A Declining Industry 11

3.2 THE COLLAPSE OF THE SKIN TRADE 18

3.3 THE U.S. PET FOOD MARKET 19

3.4 The Domestic Market: Killing Kangaroos to Feed Greyhounds 20

3.5 BACKGROUND: THE AUSTRALIAN GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY 22

4. PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY 23

4.1 Human Health and Safety Concerns 23

4.2 COMPANION ANIMAL HEALTH RISKS 30

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT 31

6. ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICS 32

7. RECOMMENDATIONS 37

7.1 Calls to Action 37

7.2 LONG-TERM POLICY DIRECTION 38

7.3 STAKEHOLDER IMPLICATIONS 38

CONCLUSIONS 39

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 40

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



For decades, Australia has allowed and encouraged the killing of its native kangaroos for skins and meat. The industry never achieved substantial economic scale. It relied on a small number of significant foreign markets, which have been in a long-running decline. Sales of bushmeat from wild kangaroos in Australia have plummeted since Russia banned imports in 2009 after detecting dangerous levels of bacterial contamination. At the time, Russia imported over 70% of all kangaroo meat. The industry has been badly impaired by the loss of its largest market. China has refused to accept kangaroo meat for over 10 years on welfare grounds. The United States now imports less than 0.7% of total export volume, and the industry's own representatives have described it as being on a "downward spiral." Kangaroo meat export volumes have collapsed by around 86% since their peak in the early 2000s, yet the trade limps along, finding pockets of markets around the world that still continue to power nighttime shoots. It is sustained overwhelmingly by Belgian and broader European demand, which now absorbs 55% of all exported kangaroo meat. The industry has just made a deal with Vietnam for some of this bushmeat.

A global campaign has cut off markets for kangaroo skins with devastating impact on the industry. Skin prices have collapsed from $18.50 in 2010 to less than $0.25 today, a 98% drop in value, as major athletic brands including Adidas, Nike, Puma, ASICS, New Balance, Mizuno, and Sokito have ceased or committed to phasing out kangaroo leather in their footwear. With the collapse of the skins trade, its meat industry counterpart has become unviable, surviving merely thanks to its European buyers.

In this assessment, we provide evidence of a previously unreported dimension to the industry's decline: a growing reliance on supplying cheap kangaroo meat to Australia's greyhound racing industry. In a finding that should alarm every animal advocate, two industries widely regarded as inhumane, the commercial killing of kangaroos and the racing of greyhounds, are commercially intertwined.

This report examines the industry's economic footing, food safety record, environmental impact, and animal welfare failings, drawing on a multitude of sources. The evidence presented demonstrates that the commercial kangaroo bushmeat trade is an industry in decline, posing serious and escalating public health risks, and inflicting suffering on millions of sentient animals, including dependent young.

Photo credit: Peter and Andrea Hylands of Creative Cowboy Films

This report examines the industry's economic footing, food safety record, environmental impact, and animal welfare failings, drawing on a multitude of sources. The evidence presented here demonstrates that the commercial kangaroo bushmeat trade is an industry in decline, posing serious and escalating public health risks, and inflicting suffering on millions of sentient animals, including dependent young. Many 21st-century wildlife agencies, including those in the United States, generally severely restrict sales of meat from commercially killed wild animals. Australia's bushmeat trade violates that norm.

The authors of this report call for a comprehensive, independent investigation into the food safety risks of kangaroo meat and some measure of transparency about in-field killing and processing. It is highly unusual for the United States to permit the importation of hunted wildlife from another country. Kangaroo meat has been repeatedly shown to harbor dangerous pathogens unacceptable to two of the world's largest economies. It is produced under field conditions that would be impermissible in any domestic meat processing operation. Additionally, the carcass lead content would never pass food safety inspections.

Especially with the global athletic shoe industry halting sourcing of kangaroo skins, it is clear that the enterprise cannot sustain itself in the free market. The government's role in propping up the industry may be substantially underappreciated, and the revelation about the greyhound racing industry purchasing kangaroo meat largely explains how the enterprise retains some commercial viability. Yet it is still a highly fragile and archaic trade conducted at a time when that kind of commerce is widely reviled.



PRIMARY TAKEAWAYS

Between 1.3 and 1.5 million adult kangaroos are now killed for commercial purposes (meat and skin) annually - down from a peak of 4 million at the start of this century, with approximately half a million additional deaths of their dependent young.

The industry is one of the world's last sources of commercial bushmeat left in the world.

The industry is teetering on the edge of collapse because shooters cannot cover their costs - they receive only 90 cents per kg of meat and skin value has virtually been wiped out, resulting in mass disposal.

The kangaroo industry supplies meat to the Australian racing greyhound industry. The two industries appear to be connected by Ray Borda, who started his career in the 1980s selling kangaroo meat for pet food. Borda, who refers to himself as the "pioneer" of the global kangaroo meat industry, is the founder and managing director of Macro Group Australia, the largest exporter of kangaroo meat to the world. He is also the national president of the Australian Wild Game Industry Council and consultant to the Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel. He has himself owned thousands of racing greyhounds over decades. The Australian public overwhelmingly opposes greyhound racing, with national polling showing roughly two-thirds want it ended, and Tasmania's government is now moving to ban the activity outright.

The kangaroo meat industry contributes next to nothing to Australia's economy: meat exports were worth just $10.9 million (AUD) in gross dollars in 2025 - a fraction of the $20 billion red meat export market - with export volumes collapsing from over 12,000 tonnes at their early-2000s peak to just 1,700 tonnes in 2025. The industry claims to support around 3,000 jobs. But this claim is almost certainly vastly inflated, with some estimates putting that number at 255 full-time jobs.

Kangaroo species and other macropods carry a wide range of parasitic nematodes (worms) and pathogens, exposing consumers to known diseases as well as emerging zoonotic threats, and contamination risks that are not necessarily present in conventional meat from farmed animals. Government records reveal meat that failed safety testing was exported to overseas consumers anyway.

Kangaroo meat is contaminated through intestinal spillage, cross-species contamination, transport exposure, and unsanitary chiller storage - risks compounded by nighttime, remote-location killing with no point-of-kill meat inspection and no pre-slaughter health screening.

The kangaroo industry deposits an estimated 1.4 metric tonnes of lead ammunition into Australia's rangelands each year, contaminating soils, waterways, and the food chain, and posing serious neurological, cardiovascular, and reproductive health risks to anyone who consumes the meat, including scavenging wildlife.

Millions of kangaroos, including dependent young, are killed in violation of basic animal welfare standards, with up to a 40% misshot rate, and left to die slowly, while joeys are killed by blunt force trauma or decapitation, or left to starve or be predated after their mothers are slaughtered.

INTRODUCTION



1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This report presents academic and investigative research that contradicts the most prominent claims made by the kangaroo meat industry. It exposes an industry that has negligible economic value anywhere in Australia, operates through systematically cruel practices, poses significant public health risks to both people and pets, and damages ecosystems while falsely marketing itself as environmentally friendly.

The report is split into sections, providing a comprehensive overview of the economics of the industry, health and safety concerns, and animal welfare issues inherent in the industry. The report concludes with directions for further investigation and offers calls to action to address the issues raised.

Specifically, the report aims to:

1. Deconstruct misleading and erroneous narratives propagated by the kangaroo meat industry and document an industry in decline.
2. Educate the public about the health and safety risks of kangaroo meat consumption for both people and companion animals.
3. Inform lawmakers in Australia and internationally, particularly members of the U.S. Congress and of the Belgian and European Union parliaments considering import bans on kangaroo meat about the facts associated with the industry trade.
4. Support legislative and regulatory action to halt kangaroo product imports into the United States, European Union, and other countries.
5. Inform further investigation and inquiry to address food safety, animal welfare, and sustainability issues.
6. Expose a previously unreported commercial nexus between the kangaroo meat industry and Australia's greyhound racing industry, in which cheap kangaroo meat sourced from commercial processors is used to feed thousands of racing dogs, compounding the moral problems associated with each of the fraying enterprises.

1.2 Background: The Natural History of Macropods

Kangaroos and their relatives, collectively known as macropods, from the Greek for "big foot," represent one of the most distinctive and successful groups of mammals to have evolved on Earth. Their evolutionary origins trace back to at least the late Oligocene, with fossil evidence in northwestern Queensland (Riversleigh) documenting early kangaroo species from approximately 23.5-26 million years ago. Fossil deposits provided an unbroken sequence of transitional forms and have allowed paleontologists to trace macropod evolutionary change across millions of years to three distinct lineages that would give rise to modern kangaroos: Macropodidae, Hypsiprymnodontidae, and Balbaridae - an extinct family of fanged kangaroos.

Around 11 million years ago, by the middle of the Miocene period, the ancestors of modern kangaroos and wallabies became the most diverse and numerous animals, displacing the earlier fanged kangaroos as Australia's dominant large herbivores. The kangaroos we recognize today diversified roughly 3-5 million years ago, as expanding grasslands reshaped much of the Australian continent. This evolutionary journey, spanning tens of millions of years, unfolded in the absence of human predation. Humans are estimated to have first arrived on the Australian continent between 50,000 and 65,000 years ago, meaning that macropods spent the vast majority of their evolutionary history without exposure to systematic hunting pressure.

The diversity that resulted from this prolonged evolution is remarkable. Macropods, the iconic kangaroos, wallabies, and rat-kangaroos, are found from the wet forests of Tasmania and Queensland to the sandy deserts of central Australia, and to the subalpine grasslands of New Guinea. Today, the kangaroo family comprises approximately 65 living species across Australia and New Guinea, ranging in size from the 2-meter-tall red kangaroo, which can weigh up to 90 kg, to the tiny musky rat-kangaroo, which weighs just 500 grams. These extremes represent a fantastic size range and illustrate the degree to which macropods have evolved into virtually every available terrestrial niche on the continent. The four species targeted by the commercial kangaroo meat and skins industry are the red kangaroo (Macropus rufus), eastern grey kangaroo (M. giganteus), western grey kangaroo (M. fuliginosus), and common wallaroo (M. robustus). Their ranges collectively encompass the arid and semi-arid sheep rangelands covering around 40% of the Australian mainland.

Macropods have evolved a suite of biological characteristics that are unique among mammals and reflect millions of years of adaptation to Australia's unpredictable and often harsh environments. Mothers can nurse two young of different ages at once, producing distinct milk from each teat to match each joey's developmental needs, and their hopping is energy-efficient at higher speeds, with tendons storing and releasing elastic energy like springs. Macropods also exhibit embryonic diapause, including the longest period known in any mammal, as well as synchronized seasonal breeding and prolonged and sophisticated lactation within a well-defined pouch. The capacity for embryonic diapause is a critical adaptation to life in drought-prone landscapes, enabling females to rapidly resume reproduction following rainfall. At slow speeds, kangaroos use their tail as a fifth limb for support and balance. At higher speeds they switch to their distinctive hopping gait. Uniquely among large animals, this actually becomes more energy-efficient the faster they travel, making kangaroos exceptionally well-adapted to covering long distances across Australia's expansive landscapes.

The deep evolutionary depth of kangaroos and other macropods is further evident in the diversity of extinct forms they encompass. During the ice ages, Australia was home to a now-vanished group of giant short-faced kangaroos, the largest of which, Procoptodon goliah, stood around 2 meters tall and weighed up to 240 kg, roughly three times the mass of the largest red kangaroo today. The Australian megafauna of some 50,000 years ago also included giant wombats, enormous flightless birds, and large monitor lizards, with more than 85% of Australia's mammals, birds, and reptiles weighing over 45 kg going extinct in association with the arrival of the first humans. Researchers consider these extinctions to be primarily related to human hunting in conjunction with environmental change. Today's kangaroos and their kin represent the outcome of a prolonged and complex evolutionary process, shaped by tens of millions of years of adaptation to one of the world's most demanding environments, and it is a process that unfolded entirely without commercial human intervention.

In the Anthropocene, the age of intensified human impact on nature and the environment (roughly perceived as the industrial revolution), the human relationship with kangaroos has transformed from that of coexistence to commercial use. Whereas Indigenous peoples maintained totemic relationships with kangaroo species, people of European descent exploit kangaroos for their meat and skins. Kangaroos have always been hunted and utilized, but in the past half century the commercial killing of wild (not farmed) kangaroos has grown. Over one and a half million adult kangaroos are killed every year for commercial purposes; another half million joeys are killed or die as collateral (waste), causing an immense animal welfare issue.

Environmental and ethical questions arise as to whether this commercial wildlife industry is justified or necessary. After all, wildlife such as white-tailed deer and boars are commonly hunted in the Northern Hemisphere. The difference is that they are not commercially exploited as a commodity for export to international markets. The commercialization of kangaroo species, labeled as a "sustainable" resource, subjects them to free market rules of supply and demand, which, in the history of wildlife policy, has led to depletion and, in more than a few cases, extinction.

Practical animal welfare standards that apply to other animal husbandry industries are decidedly absent from the kangaroo industry. As this report will show, although kangaroos live in the wild, the resultant harm to wild kangaroos, particularly joeys, is immense, even when compared to the industry standards of the cattle and pork industries. As such, the social license of the commercial kangaroo industry fails on both environmental and welfare considerations. Moreover, the lack of animal husbandry level pathogenic regulation subjects consumers of kangaroo products (and society) to increased risk of zoonotic diseases, which are an intensifying health concern.

As this report will show, although kangaroos live in the wild, the resultant harm to wild kangaroos, particularly joeys, is immense, even when compared to the industry standards of the cattle and pork industries.

Shifting from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric approach to kangaroo management, commonly called coexistence, can remedy most of these issues. Consumption of forage by kangaroos concerns farmers, but that kind of concern cannot justify this extreme form of wildlife killing for bushmeat and the skins trade.

The environment, which has coevolved with kangaroos, should continue to do so without the crude intervention of the commercial kill. The negative impacts of livestock, including cattle, sheep, and goats (through soil compression and heavy grazing), on the Australian grazing landscapes, and non-native predators, including foxes and cats, on wildlife, supersede any perceived impact of kangaroos. Failure to deal with these environmental impacts will always render kangaroo management pointless.

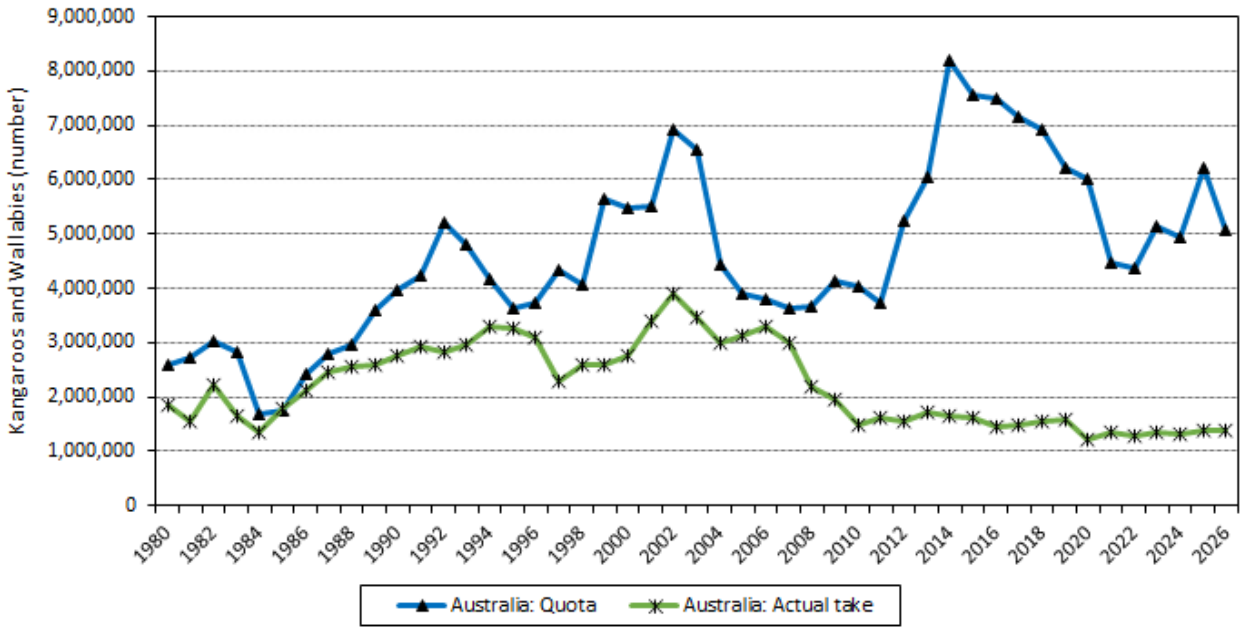
Kangaroos evolved over millions of years. The commercial killing industry that governs them today is, by contrast, an entirely artificial and recent imposition, one measured not in geological time but in annual and often arbitrary quotas set by Australia's state governments.

2. INDUSTRY OVERVIEW AND REGULATION

2.1 Commercial Quotas vs. Actual Take

Quotas for the commercial take of kangaroos are published by Australian state governments each year. The state quotas are based on a share of the states' annual kangaroo population estimates, which are published every year in the quota reports. State population estimates are based, in part, on kangaroo population surveys, the methodology for which tends to vary between states and over time.

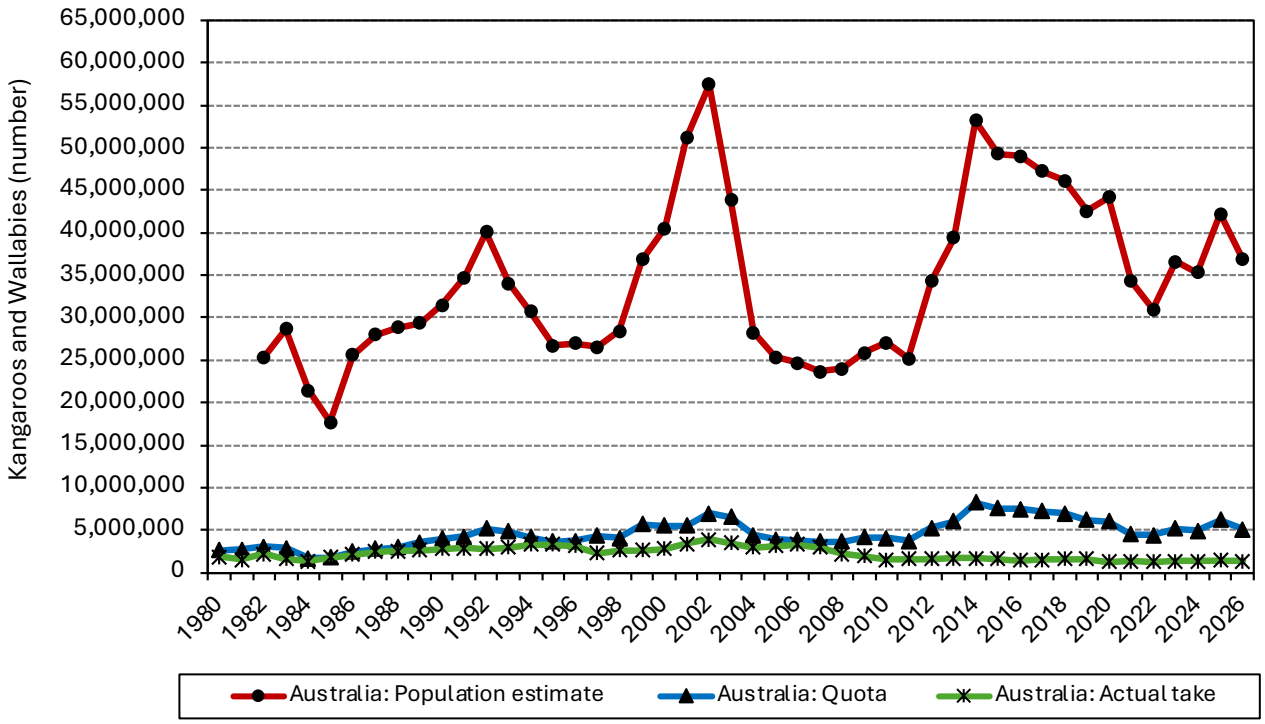
Figure 1: Quota and actual take of kangaroo species for the Australian mainland from 1980-2026.



Since 1980, there has been significant variability in quotas driven by widely fluctuating state population estimates, as demonstrated by the graphs above and below. At its highest, the mainland population was estimated at 57.43 million in 2002, when the quota reached 7 million.

Some of the annual population increases claimed by state governments are biologically implausible. Kangaroos have low reproduction rates, are killed in large numbers, and face environmental pressures and habitat loss - all these factors preclude sudden population booms.

Figure 2: Population estimate, quota, and actual take of kangaroo species for the Australian mainland, 1980–2026.



The decline in actual take against quota is a result of inflated population estimates in each state leading to high quotas that cannot and have not been met. Since 2010, the commercial take has flatlined. This is despite significant extensions of kill zones in the states of New South Wales, South Australia, and Victoria, the addition of new species to the commercial kill list, the opening of public lands including state and national parks and increased urban spaces, the simplification of digital reporting, and the introduction of bounties and subsidies. None of these expansions have moved the take upward.

The commercial killing of kangaroos has long been justified by state and federal governments as best-practice management of "overabundant" and "nuisance" populations. That justification is not borne out by the data. If the goal were genuine population control, the industry would be expected to take a meaningful share of the authorized quota year after year. Instead, kill levels are driven by market forces, carcass prices, and the number of commercial shooters. For example, in 2014, the quota was set at 8.19 million animals while the actual take was 1.64 million - just 20% of that year's authorized kill.

The core argument used to justify the commercial kill is that it achieves population control of the so-called "booming" kangaroo populations. This is simply not supported by the outcome. An industry that consistently falls short of kangaroo take by 80% cannot logically claim that it is engaging in precise wildlife management. It is a commercialized bushmeat enterprise, cloaked in the garb and rhetoric of wildlife management but not meeting the rigorous standards that professional wildlife managers would demand.

3. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

3.1 A Declining Industry

The commercial kangaroo meat and skins industry evolved from the culling of kangaroos deemed "pests" by farmers and started in the late 1950s. Wild rabbits had long supplied the pet food trade with a cheap source of meat, but when the myxomatosis virus collapsed rabbit populations that same decade, there was a surge in kangaroo shooting that fed both the meat and skins trades. The two revenue streams have been intertwined ever since: kangaroo carcasses are field-dressed with skins left in place and only removed at the processing plant, where both meat and hides are processed for domestic and export markets. Concurrently, a non-commercial killing program has operated alongside the industry since its inception, with state and territory governments issuing destruction permits that allow landowners to kill kangaroos for "damage mitigation" purposes entirely outside the commercial quota system - resulting in the additional non-commercial deaths of over 1 million kangaroos and wallabies and their young. Notably and historically, the bodies of these kangaroos have not been used commercially but instead disposed of.

In the early 1990s, human consumption of the meat began to increase when it was falsely promoted globally as a unique, healthy, and sustainable protein. Still, its use as pet food dominated the market with roughly three-quarters of it being used for pet food. In the mid-2000s the balance shifted, with more kangaroo meat being sold for human consumption and around a third being used in pet food. This economic trend is estimated to be similar today.

The human/pet food split is, however, an industry-modeled estimate rather than a figure verified by government trade data. In response to a Question on Notice from Senator Mehreen Faruqi on June 11, 2026, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry confirmed that it does not hold or have access to information that would allow it to provide reliable estimates of the proportion of kangaroo meat exported for human consumption as opposed to pet food, noting that Australia's export classification system does not distinguish between the two end uses, and that it does not hold any specific information on the domestic use of kangaroo products. Given these gaps, the authors of this report reached out to Agriculture Minister Julie Collins to seek clarification on the economics of the commercial kangaroo industry both domestically and internationally. As of the publication of this report, her response is pending.

The same Question on Notice response gives some sense of the scale of government assistance. The Australian Government provides matching funding to the AgriFutures Kangaroo Research, Development and Extension Program, which had received $84,946 (AUD) in Commonwealth matching funds for the 2025–26 financial year alone. In the same period, the department spent a further $27,168.93 (AUD) hosting a delegation from Vietnam's Department of Animal Health and Production to audit the Australian kangaroo and wild deer meat system. This audit was undertaken as part of an attempt to expand market access for kangaroo meat to Vietnam, a desperate attempt to grow a declining market.



The market for human consumption of kangaroo meat remains decidedly niche. Within Australia, kangaroo meat constitutes only 0.5% of the total red meat consumed.

Internationally, the largest importer, Belgium, at over 500 tonnes per year, accounts for a mere fraction of the 930,000 tonnes of the country's annual meat consumption.

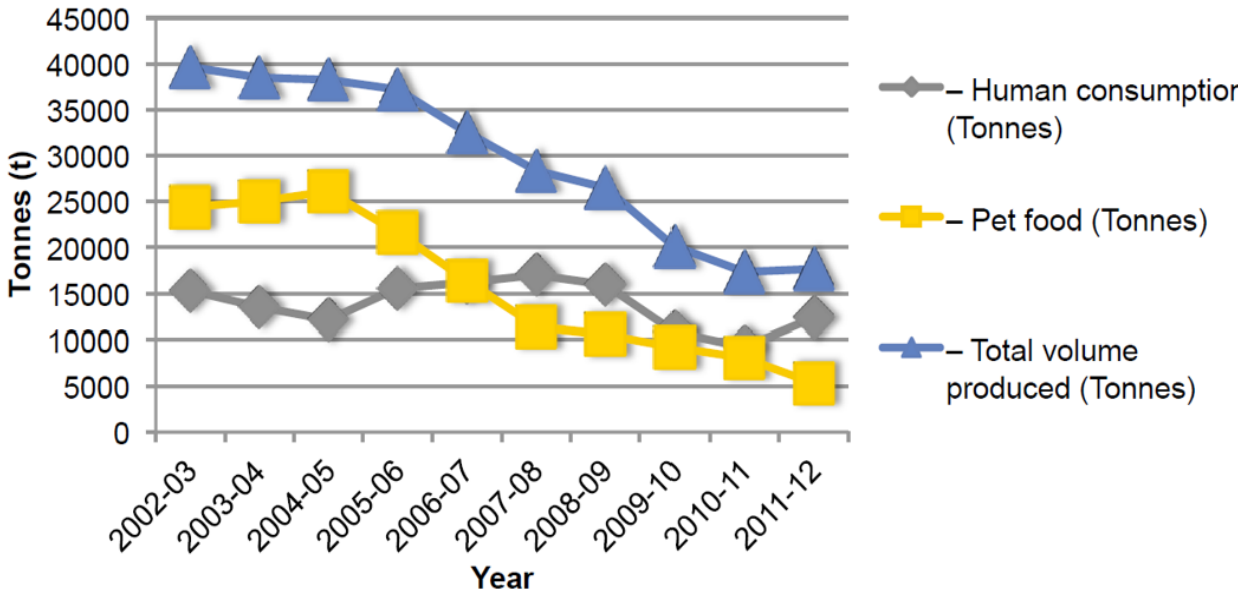
For decades, the kangaroo leather trade supplied global athletic shoe manufacturers, with skins exported to companies including Nike, Adidas, Puma, New Balance, ASICS, Mizuno, Diadora, Sokito, and Umbro. However, following sustained educational advocacy campaigns exposing the cruelty of the industry, virtually every one of these major global brands has now ceased using kangaroo leather.

According to a government advisory panel meeting notes, major sporting brands are phasing out or no longer using kangaroo skin due to a "combination of pressure from animal welfare activism and factory efficiency that results from using synthetics." As a result, "skin prices have fallen from a high in 2010 of $18.50 to now less than $0.25 per skin." The value of the skins has cratered.

The collapse of the skins market has compounded the economic decline of an industry already reeling from the loss of its major meat importer, Russia, which at its peak, accounted for over 70% of Australia's wild kangaroo meat exports - in 2006-07, the Russian market imported 10,756 tonnes of kangaroo meat.

China has consistently refused to import kangaroo meat, citing animal welfare concerns, despite ongoing industry efforts to open that market spanning over a decade. Historically known as a country with a weak stance on animal welfare protections, China's rejection underscores the depth of the industry's reputational problem.

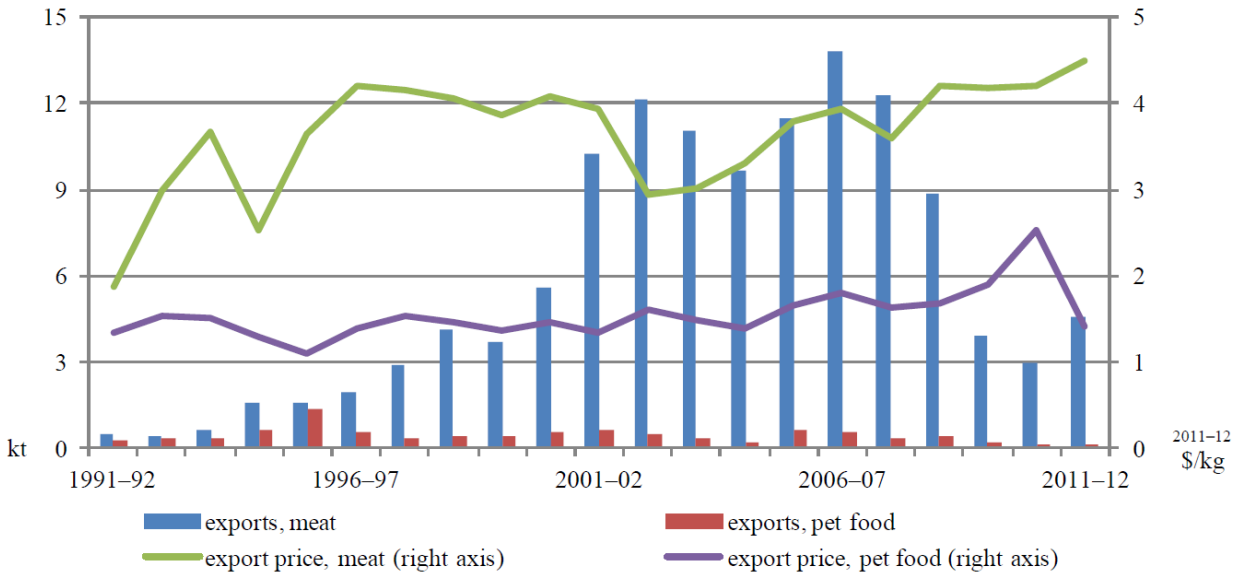
Figure 3: Volume of kangaroo meat produced for human and pet consumption (2002-2012).



Source: (ABS (2012a); SEWPAC (2012); Levies Revenue Service (2012); ABARES referred to as RIRDC, 2014)
Figure from ResearchGate.

Shortly after the 2009 Russian ban on kangaroo imports, per-kg export prices for kangaroo meat destined for human consumption rose as the industry attempted to compensate for the drastic decline in demand. However, this higher unit price could not offset the dramatic loss of volume, and total export revenue continued to fall sharply. Pet food exports followed a similar trajectory. Prices spiked briefly before taking a steep downturn, likely driven by oversupply as producers diverted unsold volume into this lower-value segment. With both markets deteriorating simultaneously, the industry was left with no profitable outlet for its product.

Figure 4: Kangaroo meat – exports and export prices, Australia.



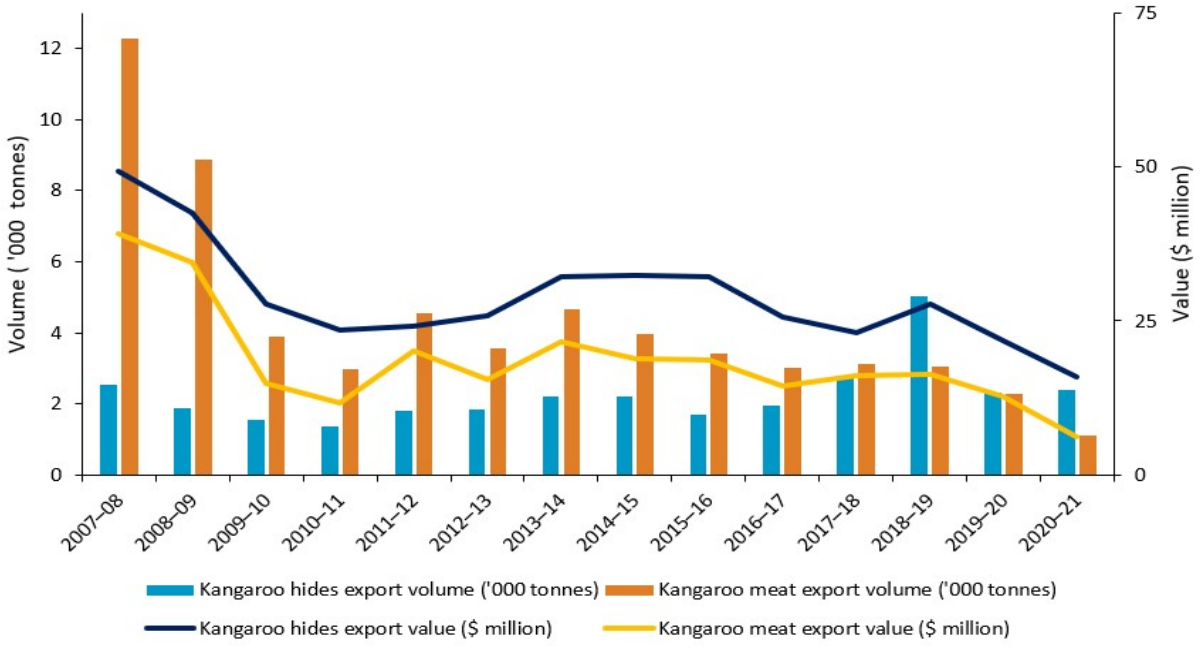
Data source: ABS (2013)
Source: AgriFutures Australia

Combined kangaroo export values for skins and meat have fallen by more than 65% from 2007–08. Kangaroo meat export volumes alone have collapsed from over 12,000 tonnes during that period to just 1,700 tonnes (86%) by 2025, confirming a decline in global demand.

For the shooters, the kangaroo meat industry has become increasingly unprofitable. The industry now sustains as few as 255 full-time jobs nationally, but assuming a 10% profit margin, it's more likely the jobs are in the dozens. The Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel (KMAP), a government body providing recommendations on the regulation of the commercial kangaroo killing program in New South Wales, one of Australia's most important states for the industry, confirms the decline in its March 2026 meeting minutes, stating the number of kangaroo shooters has dropped because the work is no longer profitable. "Many harvesters have said that it's not worth their while due to quotas, price per kilo and fuel costs. Need to shoot at least 5,000 per year to generate a reasonable income, preferably 7,000-10,000. Current price around $0.90/kg," the minutes stated. Price paid to shooters is virtually unchanged from the 80 cents to $1.00/kg paid to them in 2007, representing a significant loss in real value after nearly two decades of inflation. By the industry's own indicators, this is a collapsing enterprise. A kangaroo shooter needs to kill between 13 and 27 kangaroos every single day, year-round, just to make a living.

Processors have closed operations and chillers have been shuttered. “I think we are starting to have to seriously consider the end of the kangaroo industry nationally… significant portions of the industry are starting to question why they’re bothering anymore,” said the industry’s own John Kelly, chief executive of the Kangaroo Industry Association in 2012.

Figure 5: Kangaroo meat and hides export volumes and values, 2007-08 to 2020-21.



Kangaroo hides include kangaroo hides, skins and leather.
Data source: ABS (2013)
Source: agriculture.gov.au

In 2025, Australia’s kangaroo meat export industry had a total value of $10.9 million (AUD) - a quarter of the value from its peak of over $40 million (AUD) in 2007-2008. Such figures stand in stark contrast to claims made by industry representatives that are grossly exaggerated. “The worth of the kangaroo industry is around $150-$200 million,” according to industry representative Ray Borda, who is also the owner of Macro Group Australia (formerly Macro Meats), Australia’s biggest producer of kangaroo meat. Borda made the claim at the November 2014 KMAP meeting.

For context, honey and beeswax exports from the state of New South Wales alone totaled $13.1 million (AUD) in 2024–25, already exceeding the kangaroo trade nationwide, with the U.S. importing $8.7 million of that total. Nationally, Australian honey product exports reached $64.5 million (AUD) in 2025 and continue to grow. That is nearly six times the value of the entire kangaroo meat export industry.

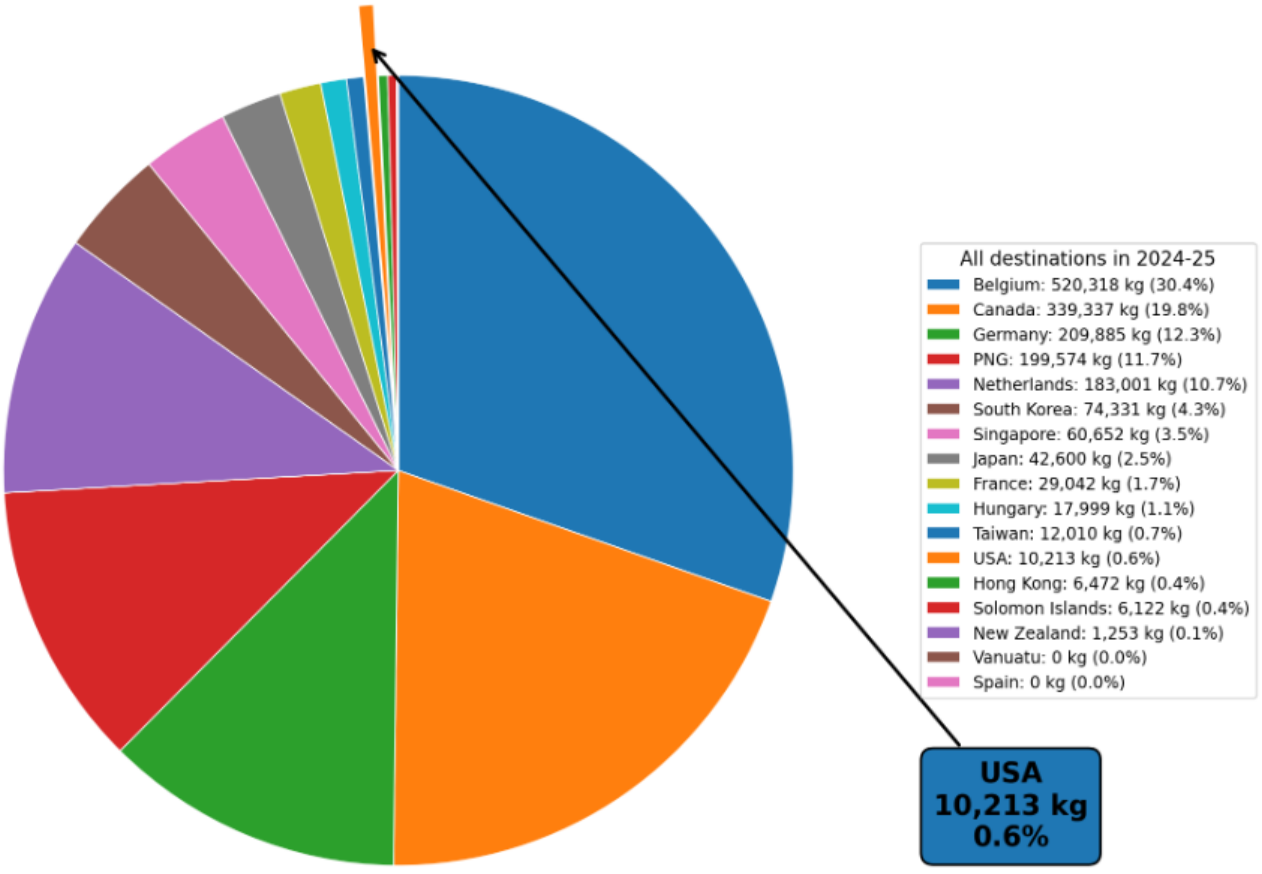
Table 1: Value (AUD$) of Australia's kangaroo meat (HS code: 0208.90.11) exports by calendar year.

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
HS Code 0208.90.11	8,459,056	10,848,807	11,534,584	10,321,292	10,890,109

Based on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) with analysis by DAFF. Retrieved 6 March 2026.

Based on official government records, the U.S. now imports under 1% of total kangaroo meat exports worldwide (0.6% in 2024-2025). The EU, led by Belgium, purchases more than 55% of Australia's export volume. Belgium likely serves as the first port of entry for kangaroo meat before onward distribution to other countries.

2024-25 Import Volume by Destination (kg)
USA Imports: 10,213 kg - 0.6% of total



According to the latest data from 2024-25, the volume of kangaroo meat exported to the United States has dropped by over 82% since 2021-22.

The kangaroo trade in the U.S. faces an expanding web of legal prohibitions. The state of California first banned the import of kangaroo meat and body parts in 1971. In 2007, the ban was lifted after intense lobbying by the Australian government and the commercial kill industry, and the application of the ban was intermittent through the years. The ban, however, was permanently reinstated in January 2016. Mild attempts to restore commercial trade in kangaroo parts, including a bill, advanced in April 2026, have been quickly swatted away by lawmakers. At the federal level, the Kangaroo Protection Act of 2025 was introduced in both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. The bill seeks to prohibit the sale, manufacture, and distribution of all kangaroo products in the United States. If passed, it would also stop imports of the bushmeat for human and pet consumption as well as skin and any other body parts.

Table 2: Full list of Australia's destination countries for kangaroo meat exports by volume (HS code: 0208.90.11).

	Volume (KG)			
Destination	**2021-22**	**2022-23**	**2023-24**	**2024-25**
Belgium	375,209	392,313	441,605	520,318
Canada	515,168	159,990	165,812	339,337
Germany	214,859	397,754	120,985	209,885
PNG	203,918	294,524	165,809	199,574
Netherlands	142,122	274,432	175,457	183,001
South Korea	86,752	114,771	103,556	74,331
Singapore	63,036	69,892	66,451	60,652
Japan	50,629	35,345	28,895	42,600
France		76,100	69,382	29,042
Hungary				17,999
Taiwan			575	12,010
USA	59,001	12,733	13,447	10,213
Hong Kong	4,186	6,238	6,982	6,472
Solomon Islands	6,730	2,475	3,364	6,122
New Zealand		1,254	2,051	1,253
Vanuatu			8	
Spain			23,487	
Grand Total	**1,721,610**	**1,837,821**	**1,387,867**	**1,712,810**

Based on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) with analysis by DAFF. Retrieved 6 March 2026.

The EU tops the chart of kangaroo meat imports, with Belgium at the helm, responsible for over 30% of the international demand. Belgian appetite for kangaroo bushmeat remains the highest among all destinations, despite the Flanders regional government's 2025 attempt to ban the sale of kangaroo products, an effort the Australian government and industry lobby fought to overturn.

Tables 3 and 4: Value and volume of kangaroo meat and edible offal exports by destination.

Value (A$) of Australia's kangaroo meat exports to the world, 2017 to 30 April 2026.

Markets	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU	11,487,919	13,515,777	10,898,292	5,442,039	3,340,233	7,497,487	7,594,297	6,247,391	6,340,980	2,620,104
Papua New Guinea	1,289,807	1,072,483	1,639,643	840,004	667,907	1,044,579	1,362,986	957,963	895,938	176,060
Canada	388,699	722,050	513,043	882,246	2,428,453	732,701	1,001,786	1,272,356	1,763,044	366,253
Korea, Republic of (South)	271,659	251,478	230,264	260,636	303,666	539,799	580,719	340,969	588,020	247,000
Singapore	93,719	156,103	136,414	166,896	335,441	262,778	516,032	623,779	366,507	98,841
Japan	210,208	229,961	378,155	214,141	209,786	451,581	357,262	382,886	289,472	91,240
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	65,426	81,978	70,770	43,662	71,632	60,109	69,743	38,403	114,876	55,811
Solomon Islands		72,027	85,279	44,502	19,800	14,469	34,559	20,700	57,812	37,200
United States of America	361,563	100,699	549,972	150,103	1,067,965	240,003	12,987	397,466	74,240	96,294
New Zealand	179,961	11,399	98,462	48,675	14,173	5,201	4,213	15,044	17,829	
South Africa	2,301,812	1,130,741		76,797					234,947	
Cambodia				1,051						
Switzerland		56,166	209,722	30,286						
Vanuatu	4,000							145	790	
Viet Nam	175,472									
New Caledonia		7,458		14,812						
Indonesia	35,000		41,800	47,710					87,280	
Seychelles	9,199	5,293	5,432							
Taiwan								24,190	36,040	38,380
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland									22,334	
Grand Total	**16,874,444**	**17,413,613**	**14,857,248**	**8,263,560**	**8,459,056**	**10,848,807**	**11,534,584**	**10,321,292**	**10,890,109**	**3,827,183**

Includes goods with Australian Harmonized Export Commodity Classification (AHECC) code '0208.90.11 - Fresh, chilled or frozen meat and edible meat offal of kangaroo.' This is the only AHECC code that exclusively includes kangaroo products.

Volume (kg) of Australia's kangaroo meat exports to the world, 2017 to 30 April 2026.

Markets	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU	1,859,702	2,136,050	1,684,977	889,639	547,391	1,081,051	839,302	952,880	1,080,571	390,811
Papua New Guinea	397,168	315,703	443,811	180,238	155,524	215,816	283,675	188,738	185,954	36,594
Canada	107,191	201,277	146,509	242,446	467,340	150,920	211,868	267,823	359,920	71,980
Korea, Republic of (South)	100,379	79,422	73,181	79,113	71,603	105,703	124,785	62,498	102,650	33,990
Singapore	19,346	32,387	25,840	38,957	65,347	44,674	74,275	70,715	54,747	14,001
Japan	32,031	21,966	59,462	30,939	18,606	59,891	30,401	48,437	35,509	6,752
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	6,150	5,621	6,718	4,809	7,042	5,530	7,707	4,577	12,000	6,230
Solomon Islands		21,185	25,376	13,712	4,000	2,730	5,839	3,514	9,810	5,996
United States of America	28,710	8,799	50,582	10,802	66,932	11,345	1,388	23,660	2,628	6,874
New Zealand	50,694	1,212	28,201	12,019	1,263	1,254	742	1,309	1,900	
South Africa	859,346	369,463		23,033					46,989	
Cambodia				200						
Switzerland		5,362	19,026	2,815						
Vanuatu	4,055							8	200	
Viet Nam	61,972									
New Caledonia		396		990						
Indonesia	17,000		17,000	17,575					25,400	
Seychelles	1,258	810	500							
Taiwan								4,576	8,009	7,996
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland									7,495	
Grand Total	**3,545,007**	**3,199,654**	**2,581,182**	**1,547,287**	**1,405,046**	**1,678,915**	**1,579,981**	**1,628,735**	**1,933,782**	**581,224**

Includes goods with Australian Harmonized Export Commodity Classification (AHECC) code '0208.90.11 - Fresh, chilled or frozen meat and edible meat offal of kangaroo.'
This is the only AHECC code that exclusively includes kangaroo products.
Data source: ABS 2026.

3.2 THE COLLAPSE OF THE SKIN TRADE

As of January 1, 2026, the largest global athletic wear brands including Adidas, New Balance, ASICS, Nike, Puma, Sokito, and Diadora have ceased using kangaroo leather in their products, with Umbro committed to stopping production in 2026 and Mizuno committed to phasing out all its shoes made with kangaroo leather. This represents an unprecedented corporate animal welfare victory achieved through the Kangaroos Are Not Shoes campaign of the Center for a Humane Economy. The same inhumane means are being used to source kangaroo meat. The skin trade and the meat trade are the economic drivers of the mass killing.

In May 2025, Center president Wayne Pacelle traveled to Fürth, Germany, to address shareholders at the Adidas Annual General Meeting. He made the case directly to the company's leadership: the commercial kill of kangaroos in Australia, a nighttime slaughter of millions of animals that leaves hundreds of thousands of joeys orphaned or dead, was incompatible with any credible commitment to ethical sourcing. Adidas CEO Bjørn Gulden responded. The company had stopped sourcing kangaroo leather, he told shareholders. It was the most significant corporate commitment the campaign had secured.

The announcement set off a chain reaction. Companies that had been watching the campaign's pressure build for five years moved quickly. ASICS wrote to the Center in July 2025, announcing it would discontinue kangaroo leather across its full product line by the end of the year. Guided by its founding philosophy, "A Sound Mind in a Sound Body," the company stated it had "successfully developed products that offer superior performance and sustainability compared to previous kangaroo leather models" and that it remained "committed to ethical sourcing" and "sustainable business practices."

Mizuno followed, telling the Center in June 2025 that it was planning a gradual phase out, and that future material decisions would be guided by "diverse values, including not only functionality but also environmental considerations" to "achieve sustainable procurement in harmony with society." In June 2026, Mizuno reaffirmed that commitment, stating it would "ensure a responsible and sustainable transition without compromising product integrity" and that it remained "fully committed to this direction."

The Center for a Humane Economy launched the Kangaroos Are Not Shoes campaign in 2020. Five years later, every major global athletic shoe brand had either exited the trade or committed to do so.

Not every company waited for a major competitor to move first. In April 2024, Sokito, a UK-based football boot brand that had used kangaroo leather as the only animal-derived leather in its cleats, did its own research into the industry's practices and didn't like what it found. Citing concerns over "kangaroo population management practices, and population count discrepancies" in the commercial kill managed by the Australian government, founder Jake Hardy and the board of directors voted unanimously to stop using kangaroo leather with immediate effect, switching to a vegan alternative across Sokito's full range. "As a brand that represents a sustainable and ethical choice for footballers," said Hardy, "our materials and supply chain practices must be of the highest standard. The time is right to phase out kangaroo leather."

Together, these commitments from Adidas, ASICS, Mizuno, Sokito, Nike, Puma, New Balance, and Umbro closed off the market that had sustained the commercial kangaroo kill for decades. The Center for a Humane Economy launched the Kangaroos Are Not Shoes campaign in 2020. Five years later, every major global athletic shoe brand had either exited the trade or committed to do so.

3.3 THE U.S. PET FOOD MARKET

Kangaroo meat in the United States pet food market holds a niche position. Promoted primarily as a hypoallergenic protein source for dogs and cats, it accounts for less than 4.5% of the total market with Belgium again being the prominent market force driving demand at over 82% of market share.

Figure 6: Value (AUD$) of export markets for pet food 2011-12 (source ABS, 2012).

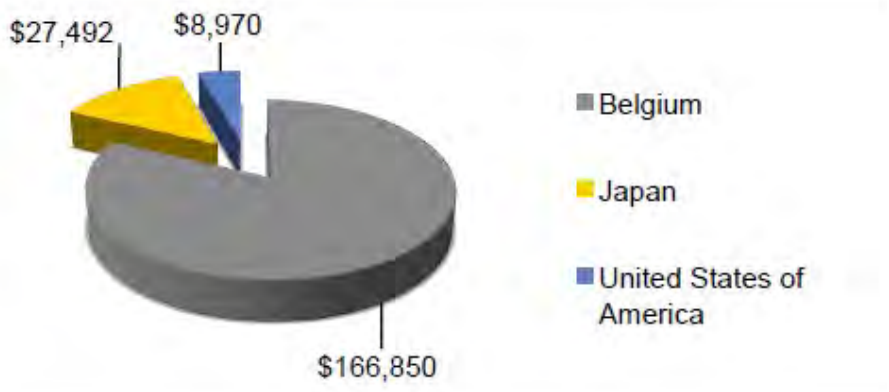


Figure from ResearchGate

Even within this small market share, several major U.S. pet food companies use kangaroo meat in their formulations (most likely because it is marketed as a unique protein source, an alternative to chicken which some dogs are allergic to), including Zignature, Addiction Pet Foods, Rayne Nutrition, KOHA, Royal Canin, Billy and Margot, PureVita, and Blackwing Meats.

Pet food companies selling products with kangaroo meat in the U.S.



Occupying a very small market position, kangaroo-based pet food has caused documented food safety concerns. In 2014, the U.S. "Jump Your Bones" brand recalled kangaroo pet treats due to Salmonella risk, and in 2020, Real Pet Food company recalled dry pet food containing kangaroo over similar contamination concerns.

Beyond bacterial pathogens, blood testing across all commercially hunted kangaroo species has confirmed exposure to T. gondii, a foodborne parasite with significant health implications for both humans and pets. The parasite exhibits high genetic variability in kangaroos, and genetically variable strains have already caused toxoplasmosis outbreaks linked to undercooked game meat in Australia, the United States, and Canada.

Given the documented risks of contaminated kangaroo meat to both pets and humans, the relatively small niche that kangaroo pet food occupies in the U.S. market, and the cruelty of the commercial kangaroo industry, including the killing of dependent joeys and widespread animal welfare violations, the import of products made from kangaroo meat into the United States warrants re-examination. The marginal market presence combined with significant ethical and public health concerns raises fundamental questions about whether kangaroo-based pet food products serve any legitimate purpose that could not be met by alternative, more humane protein sources. American pet owners have no independent means of verifying whether the kangaroo-based products they purchase are safe; they must rely entirely on Australian food safety standards which remain woefully inadequate when it comes to the commercial kangaroo meat industry.

3.4 The Domestic Market: Killing Kangaroos to Feed Greyhounds

Research conducted for this report has identified a significant, previously unexamined outlet absorbing the surplus of a collapsing industry - Australia's greyhound racing industry. As the international skins and meat markets that once sustained the kangaroo industry have contracted or are on the verge of total elimination, kangaroo meat has become a cheap, high-volume feed source for Australian racing greyhounds, tying two industries widely regarded as inherently cruel and inhumane directly together. Society does not generally accept the large-scale commercial killing of wild animals to feed companion animals on this scale; it is harder still to justify killing wild animals specifically to feed dogs bred and raced for gambling.

The connecting figure between the two industries is Ray Borda, managing director of Macro Group Australia, a company that controls the country's largest retail distribution of kangaroo meat and supplies Australian supermarkets and major export markets. Borda also serves as national president of the Australian Wild Game Industry Council (AWGIC), the peak body representing the kangaroo industry. Borda has been involved in greyhound racing for four decades and has, at various points, owned as many as 1,400 greyhounds, with around 300 actively racing as of 2026 under the "Aston" prefix used for his breeding operation. Borda has, according to sources, harvested profits totaling $18 million from his greyhound racing. The Macro Group markets kangaroo mince explicitly as high-performance bulk feed for Australia's racing greyhounds. One arm of Borda's kangaroo meat business, Fresh Pet Food Co, sponsors the Greyhound Adoption Program and greyhound races in South Australia, and is located on the same Athol Park site as Macro Group Australia. These multiple roles, as a kangaroo industry consultant, the largest kangaroo meat exporter, a major greyhound owner/racer, and a meat supplier to that same industry, present direct conflicts of interest that, to date, appear to have gone unexamined by regulators in either industry.

Borda has served as an advisor to the government of Australia in multiple roles, including engaging with former Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce when he was Minister of Agriculture, pushing the leader to achieve an export agreement with China. Borda claimed to government officials on state kangaroo management advisory panels "the Chinese were very interested in the idea" of importing kangaroo meat and stated that he took multiple trips to China to market the meat as ethical and sustainable.

However, in a KMAP meeting on Nov. 12, 2014, Borda, then serving as a representative of the commercial kangaroo industry, blamed the Australian government, implying it had failed badly for not bringing Australian staff in Beijing up to date with the improvements made by the kangaroo industry with regard to hygiene and animal welfare. Notes from the meeting stated the government could help "in the [negative] perception of kangaroo meat by not referring to kangaroos as a pest but as a renewable resource." The notes added, "There is still hope for a China market."

However, despite decades of lobbying efforts by the kangaroo industry and politicians to export kangaroo meat to China, the country has repeatedly declined to import the bushmeat.

The shift toward supplying the greyhound industry is illustrated by a prominent kangaroo meat processor in Roma, Queensland, which processes an estimated 500 to 2,000 kangaroos a week and supplies up to 10 tonnes of kangaroo meat a week to the greyhound racing industry. According to a source, around 90% of the meat this processor handles goes into the pet/dog food market, with the remaining 10% for human consumption. With the collapse of the international skins trade, the same processor reportedly now discards around 90% of the skins it once sold, retaining commercial value on only about 10%. According to this processor, the business has shifted in stages: first driven by skins, then by meat, and now effectively operating as a carcass market - a shift that is relatively profitable for the processor precisely because it is supplying cheap meat to the greyhound industry. An inside industry source describes shooters reporting that they must travel further to find kangaroos, and that the animals being taken are getting smaller. Many are generational shooters who are now exiting the trade and questioning whether it can be sustained.

Industry valuations cited publicly have consistently outpaced actual trade data. At a 2014 KMAP meeting, the industry was described by representative Ray Borda as worth between $150 million and $200 million, a figure repeated in a 2024 article warning that export restrictions would harm a "200-million-dollar industry." The data reveals a different story. According to Australian Government data, the industry's total export value - meat and skins combined - peaked at $88 million (AUD) in 2007-08. By 2020-21, combined value dropped to around $22 million (AUD). By 2025, meat exports alone had fallen to just under $11 million (AUD). Skins have fared even worse:



Photo credit: Jo-Anne-McArthur, We Animals Media.

kangaroo skin prices collapsed from $18.50 in 2010 to less than $0.25 today, a 98% drop, as major athletic brands ceased or committed to phasing out kangaroo leather, wiping out that side of the trade entirely.

To highlight the scale of killing required just to supply the greyhound industry, we applied the recommended feeding protocols to the number of active racing greyhounds in Australia. It is estimated there are 10,000 to 15,000 active greyhounds. According to Sydney veterinarian John Kohnke, BVSc, RDA, in his guidelines called "Feeding the Racing Greyhound for Performance," up to 1.5 pounds of meat per day should be fed to a 66-pound greyhound. Using an average kangaroo carcass weight of 25 kg, a diet of 100% kangaroo meat for this population would require roughly 99,000 to 149,000 kangaroo carcasses a year. Even a diet split evenly between kangaroo and chicken would still require an estimated 50,000 to 75,000 kangaroos annually. Because approximately 30% of kangaroos killed commercially are females that may be carrying a dependent joey, and because joeys do not survive the death of their mother, these figures translate into an estimated 129,000 to 194,000 total kangaroo deaths a year under a 100% kangaroo-meat diet, or 65,000 to 97,000 under a 50/50 kangaroo-chicken diet. This is a previously unrecognized, dog-racing-industry-driven contribution to the joey mortality rate.

3.5 BACKGROUND: THE AUSTRALIAN GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY

There are 47 greyhound tracks across six Australian states, down from around 65 a decade ago. New South Wales has recently pursued an "optimization" strategy that has closed roughly a dozen tracks in that state alone. In 2015, an investigative news program, Four Corners, exposed the prevalence of live baiting in the greyhound industry. Live baiting is an illegal training practice in which living animals (rabbits, possums, piglets, and cats) are used as lures for dogs to chase, ultimately ending in a torturous death. Following the Four Corners exposé, both the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales banned greyhound racing outright. New South Wales Premier Mike Baird reversed the state ban a few months later, under pressure from right-wing media, the Labor opposition, and the Nationals within his own coalition, at a time when the animal welfare community was not prepared to defend the ban. In the aftermath, grassroots advocacy groups such as Free the Hounds and the Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds formed and remain active. Advocates are hopeful Tasmania's Liberal government, which is now pursuing a ban on greyhound racing, will be successful in reversing the legacy of the 2015 backflip.

The industry nonetheless remains politically and economically powerful, particularly in New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria, with annual wagering on Australian greyhound racing consistently ranging from AU$7.5 billion to AU$9 billion (approximately US$5.3 billion to US$6.4 billion). Yet the underlying economics tell a different story. National breeding figures fell from 12,144 dogs in FY21 to just 7,511 in FY25, and even with this contraction, more dogs are bred than can be rehomed. Independent economic studies commissioned in Tasmania, Western Australia, and Victoria have all concluded that greyhound racing is a poor investment for taxpayers in each state.

Australian political parties the Greens and the Animal Justice Party oppose greyhound racing, as do Tasmania's Liberals, with sympathetic backbenchers within Labor in Tasmania,

Western Australia, and Queensland. Elsewhere, the major parties continue to support the industry. Government inquiries are ongoing or recently completed in New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia, with the completed inquiries reaching similar findings of animal welfare failures. National polling, along with state-level surveys in Western Australia and Queensland, has consistently found that between 57% and 64% of Australians want greyhound racing to end, against just 20% to 34% who support its continuation - roughly a 2:1 margin.

Estimating the number of dogs actively racing at any given time is not straightforward, since greyhounds typically spend only about a year in the racing industry before retirement. Based on the recent national breeding figures above, an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 active racing greyhounds are in the industry at any time. Industry experts have estimated there are around 20,000 to 50,000 greyhounds in Australia.

The fact that the declining kangaroo killing industry has found a customer in the publicly unpopular dog racing industry is emblematic of how both trades continue to survive: not through demonstrated public benefit, but by finding new ways to offload their products onto markets with little scrutiny.

4. PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

4.1 Human Health and Safety Concerns

Scientists estimate 75% of new human pathogens detected in the last three decades have originated in wild animals. Wildlife trade and consumption are primary risk factors for these emerging infectious diseases. The commercial kangaroo meat industry is decentralized, inadequately regulated, and presents serious and escalating public health threats. The mass killing, processing, and trade of wild kangaroos create conditions ripe for zoonotic disease emergence and pandemic spillover, raising food safety concerns at every level of the production chain. Historical and more recent pandemics such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which have been linked to the slaughter and consumption of wildlife, along with unexplained mass kangaroo mortality events caused by unknown pathogens, serve as major warning signs of the dangers this industry poses to public health. Research published in The Lancet Planetary Health documented 91 spillover events, instances in which pathogens jumped from consumed wildlife to humans, spanning 25 different diseases on every inhabited continent, demonstrating that the zoonotic risks of commercial wildlife meat trades are not limited to developing nations but are a worldwide threat. With the rate of new zoonotic disease emergence now exceeding five per year, this trajectory is driven by the increasing scale and commercialization of wildlife trades like Australia's kangaroo industry.

Australia is unique among developed nations in commercially exporting wild-caught bushmeat. The trade is widely recognized as a serious public health threat internationally. In countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America, bushmeat is mainly sold and consumed domestically. Scientists and global experts have repeatedly warned that the commercialization of bushmeat exposes more people to pathogens and facilitates geographic spread of diseases leading to global pandemics. Australia has commercialized and internationalized the bushmeat trade, exporting kangaroo across Europe, North America, and beyond. No other developed country operates a comparable commercial export industry based on mass slaughter of wild, land-based animals.



A kangaroo killed for the commercial trade displaying a heavy presence of gastrointestinal nematodes (phylum Nematoda), otherwise known as roundworms.

Photo source: Kangaroo Truth

The risks inherent in such a trade are well established. For example, the HIV/AIDS pandemic originated from the butchering and consumption of wild primates in Central Africa. The SARS outbreak of 2003 was traced to the wildlife trade in live animal markets in China. Ebola outbreaks in West Africa have been repeatedly linked to close contact with wild animals. The COVID-19 pandemic, which killed millions of people worldwide, has been associated with wildlife being butchered and sold at the Huanan Seafood Market in Wuhan, China. In May 2026, the Democratic Republic of Congo experienced its 17th Ebola outbreak, driven by the rare Bundibugyo strain, for which no approved vaccine or treatment exists. Much like previous occurrences, this threat was traced by scientists to the consumption of contaminated bushmeat. Within months it had claimed over 3,000 lives, spread to Uganda, and been declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (WHO). These examples demonstrate that the handling, slaughter, and consumption of wild animals creates conditions for the emergence and spread of novel zoonotic pathogens with pandemic potential. Australia's commercial kangaroo meat industry, which involves the mass killing of wild animals in uncontrolled field conditions with minimal veterinary oversight, presents precisely these risks.

Restricting trade in wildlife, including kangaroos and their body parts, should be a public health priority. Recent groundbreaking research published in the leading journal Science has confirmed this link between wildlife trade and zoonotic disease risk on a global scale. An analysis of 40 years of international wildlife trade data showed that traded mammals are 1.5 times more likely to share pathogens with humans than nontraded species, with 41% of traded species hosting at least one pathogen shared with humans. Perhaps most alarming, the study demonstrated a cumulative temporal effect: for every decade a species remains in the global wildlife trade, it shares on average one additional pathogen with humans. Australia's commercial kangaroo meat industry, involving the mass killing, field processing, transport, and international trade of wild kangaroos over many decades, exemplifies precisely the kind of sustained wildlife trade that this research identifies as a driver of pathogen transmission to humans.

Parasitic, viral, and bacterial infections are directly related to the processing, handling, and consumption of kangaroo meat, with past outbreaks documented. Kangaroos harbor over 30 bacterial, viral, fungal, and parasitic pathogens, many of which exhibit high genetic variability. These infections may be present without obvious clinical signs in an otherwise

normal-looking animal, including Salmonella and Toxoplasma gondii. Contamination occurs at virtually every stage of the supply chain: during field dressing in remote outdoor settings, where fecal spillage may contaminate carcasses; during prolonged transport in open vehicles at ambient temperatures, with carcasses of different species packed together and live animals present, creating additional opportunities for cross-contamination; and during storage in remote chillers repeatedly found to be overcrowded, blood-encrusted, and lacking basic sanitation. Kangaroo carcasses may sit in these conditions for up to two weeks before reaching a processing plant.

Parasitic infections are widespread in kangaroos. Grey kangaroos may harbor 30,000 nematodes from 20 different species, predominantly in the gastrointestinal tract. Documented cases show people becoming ill from parasites after consuming kangaroo meat. Among the thousands of parasites, one example is Echinococcus granulosus, a tapeworm responsible for hydatid disease, a serious parasitic infection. Exposure to kangaroo meat can transmit this parasite to humans and other animals.

According to the Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel of the New South Wales government in March 2026, there is a "high proportion of grey kangaroos with nematodes" in the New South Wales central west, "resulting in a downgrading of product and price."

Endangering public health, toxoplasmosis (resulting from the parasite T. gondii) also affects kangaroos and Australia does not test exported kangaroo meat for the presence of T. gondii. Toxoplasmosis infection is lifelong and chronic, and can cause serious negative health outcomes in humans, including lifelong disabilities, neurological conditions, schizophrenia, foetal brain damage, and death.



A killed kangaroo's liver, presumptively diagnosed by veterinarians as Fasciola hepatica infection, otherwise known as liver flukes.

Photo source: Kangaroo Truth

Medical and food-safety experts have warned that kangaroos can pose additional and less predictable bacterial contamination risks, because animals are killed and dressed in the field, and may bypass controls typical of conventional abattoirs. Government reports have even identified anthrax as a potential risk to humans who eat or handle kangaroo meat.

An estimated 50% of kangaroo carcasses harbor Salmonella, with the resulting illness, salmonellosis, presenting significant public health risks. Studies have found Salmonella contamination rates in products made from kangaroo ranging from 11% to 49%. Kangaroos and other macropods are also carriers of Shiga-toxigenic strains of E. coli (STEC) with eastern grey kangaroos presenting the highest rate and acting as reservoirs for the zoonotic pathogen.

Climate change is compounding these zoonotic risks. A 2026 study, published in The Lancet Planetary Health, found that rising temperatures and shifting precipitation patterns are associated with a 10% global increase in antibiotic-resistance

genes in Salmonella, a trend researchers project will worsen through the end of the century. With Salmonella already documented at alarming rates in kangaroo meat, the public health risks posed by the commercial trade are not static but are actively escalating.

Additionally, Q fever, caused by the bacterium Coxiella burnetii, is another significant concern. Kangaroos are reservoirs of this pathogen and Q fever is an occupational disease among kangaroo shooters and meat-processing workers. It can cause severe health outcomes including death, underscoring the pathogen exposure risks inherent in large-scale wildlife slaughter.

Veterinary experts emphasize the fundamental difference between kangaroo meat and conventional livestock products. Dr. Jim Keen, a veterinarian specializing in food safety, describes kangaroo meat as "bushmeat harvested from free-ranging wildlife with no routine pre-harvest health or slaughter controls." From a veterinary standpoint, he explains, the industry trades farm-level biosecurity and food safety for ecological uncertainty, creating a less predictable and higher zoonotic spillover risk profile than any conventional livestock system. The absence of herd health monitoring and routine surveillance means consumers are asked to accept uncertainty that would never be tolerated in commercial livestock operations. As Keen puts it, "You can dress it up in export and 'all natural' labels, but at the end of the day, it's still wild-shot barcoded bushmeat with none of the health and welfare controls we rely on in commercial livestock."

Australian food safety authorities recommend cooking kangaroo minced meat to at least 75˚C (167°F) to eliminate pathogens. This is significantly higher than the 63°C required for whole cuts of conventional red meat, processed in a controlled environment. This heightened temperature requirement implicitly acknowledges the elevated contamination risks inherent in wild-harvested meat processed under field conditions.

Knowing this, the kangaroo meat production chain is characterized by inherent and systemic breaches of food safety standards. Photographic evidence from the killing fields, such as the image below, shows carcasses from different species grouped together. This violates government-mandated health protocols due to the risk of cross-contamination. Other risks include carcasses exposed to high temperatures before chilling, to live animals, insects, dust, and other environmental contamination. It is not a question of if, but when, a serious disease outbreak will occur.

Epidemics and mass die-offs in wild animal populations are one of the most worrying risks to public health. Referred to as mass mortality events (MMEs), these sporadic die-offs of large kangaroo populations have been reported to occur since the 1950s. One MME in particular, where approximately 100,000 kangaroos died from an unknown pathogen in the western region of New South Wales (2016-2017), was never properly investigated by state government agencies such as the Department of Primary Industries



Photo source: Kangaroo Truth

(DPI), responsible for agriculture and food support. The DPI suspended its investigation of the event despite the deaths continuing to occur with affected kangaroos displaying "massive haemorrhaging, total or partial blindness, internal bleeding around the joints." A government veterinary expert concluded at the time that the MME was not a result of a genetic problem, but a result of an unknown disease or novel pathogen.

The food safety crisis in the kangaroo industry is further evidenced by international market rejections and documented contamination issues both past and present. In 2008, the Russian Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance undertook microbial testing of imported kangaroo meat and detected E. coli contamination, making the meat unsafe for human consumption. Industry efforts were made to resume trade with Russia, but further testing revealed similar contamination, and exports to Russia ended completely in 2014.



Image demonstrating the lack of adherence to health and safety protocols during field dressing.

Photo source: Kangaroo Truth

As evidenced by government records recently obtained under a Freedom of Information request from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry (DAFF), the systemic breach of food safety protocols and the export of contaminated kangaroo meat to consumers continues today. In 2025, an Australian kangaroo meat processing establishment, listed as approved to export to the European Union, was found to have repeatedly released microbiologically contaminated product onto export markets in direct violation of established food safety procedures:

- May-July 2025: Official government documents reveal that the processing plant recorded seven separate kangaroo meat samples with bacterial counts exceeding the EU's "marginal" threshold of 10,000 colony-forming units per square centimeter (CFU/cm²) - a measure of the number of live bacteria present in the meat - with one sample registering a near-unacceptable 30,000 CFU/cm². To put this in perspective, a "marginal" result signals that bacterial contamination has reached a level requiring immediate corrective action. It is not a minor deviation but a formal warning that the meat is approaching the boundary of what regulators consider unsafe for human consumption. No corrective action was taken and the kangaroo meat was released to export markets to unsuspecting overseas consumers.

- May 30, 2025: Initial test results came back at 340,000 CFU/cm², a figure ten times the EU's "unacceptable" threshold of 31,625 CFU/cm². Retesting failed to return acceptable results, yet the product was again released to export.

- June 24, 2025: Initial test results came back at 310,000 CFU/cm², again ten times the EU's "unacceptable" threshold. Retesting failed to return acceptable results, yet the product was again released to export.

In plain terms, kangaroo meat that regulators classify as unfit for human consumption was packaged, certified, and exported to overseas consumers. What's more, the government records reveal that kangaroo meat that has failed retesting is not destroyed. It is downgraded and provided to the domestic Australian market. Meat that Europe won't accept gets sold to Australians instead. These documented repeated failures are a damning indictment of the industry, its safety record, and its demonstrably inadequate oversight at the point of processing.

The same government records document other systemic failures. Inspectors found kangaroo meat scraps on processing equipment shared with other animal meats, with inadequate cleaning between species creating a risk of cross-contamination. On three separate occasions throughout 2025, fecal matter was found on kangaroo carcasses during processing. Other documented incidents included carcasses ineligible for export entering a processing room alongside export-bound meat, insufficient segregation during storage and processing "to preclude mixing of product with different market eligibility and edible from inedible product," processing rooms in a state of disrepair, and a lack of clear documentation demonstrating that operations met Australian meat processing standards.

In addition, metal fragments and lead bullet contamination in carcasses are a significant problem, with meat processors identifying this as a major issue affecting product quality and safety. Scientists point out that the industry introduces approximately 1.4 tonnes of lead bullets into the rangelands annually, creating toxic contamination risks that pose lethal hazards to scavenging native wildlife and potential health risks to consumers.

When lead bullets strike an animal, they fragment into hundreds to thousands of tiny particles that disperse well beyond the wound channel and remain in the meat even after standard butchering. Studies have found elevated blood lead levels in people who frequently consume wild game killed with lead ammunition. For adults, chronic lead exposure increases the risk of premature death, cardiovascular disease, kidney damage, and reproductive problems. Children and pregnant women face the greatest risks, as even low doses can impair neurological development, lower IQ, and cause long-term cognitive and behavioral deficits. Lead can also cause miscarriage, premature birth, and low birth weight. There is no safe limit for lead in meat, and most lead fragments are microscopic - too small to see or even identify with X-ray imaging or detect during butchering. Recent research suggests that harmful quantities of "lead dust" may be carried by an animal's body via the circulatory system, rendering any attempts to remove lead from the carcass potentially futile.

The severity of these many health risks is compounded by the absence of hygiene oversight at the critical point of kill in the field - where scientists suggest that most contamination of kangaroo meat occurs. Dr. Tom Pool, a veterinarian with expertise in wildlife diseases, warns that eating bushmeat from wild kangaroos carries significant health risks due to potential contamination by dangerous pathogens including Salmonella, E. coli, and Toxoplasma gondii. These risks are heightened, he notes, by the unsanitary conditions during "harvesting": kangaroos are shot in the wild at night, field-dressed (gutted) in remote



A dog present at a night shoot, in violation of hygiene rules prohibiting live animals near stored carcasses due to cross-contamination risk.

Photo source: Kangaroo Truth

rural areas with no direct oversight, and carcasses are often transported for hours in unrefrigerated open trucks exposed to dust, flies, high temperatures, and other contaminants. Shooters work entirely unsupervised at the point of kill, with no inspections conducted where animals are shot and initially processed in the field. These field conditions are not only a food safety concern but a direct zoonotic threat. Research found that in more than a quarter of documented wildlife-to-human disease spillover events, contact with animal bodily fluids before consumption caused transmission of the pathogen.

Photographic evidence has shown that kangaroo shooters do not follow even the basic hygiene requirements mandated by the government during field dressing (evisceration) and carcass storage. These rules include not permitting live animals, such as dogs, to be present due to probability of cross-contamination. Further risks of bacterial contamination arise from excessive delays between slaughter and refrigeration. While food safety standards require carcasses to be refrigerated within two hours after sunrise, the reality is that kangaroos are hung on open-air trucks at ambient temperatures of up to 113°F, with travel up to 8-10 hours before reaching remote chillers.

Further contamination risks arise in field chillers where carcasses are sometimes kept for up to 14 days until they are transported to a processing facility. These chillers have been found to breach hygiene compliance protocols. Even commercial shooters complain of noncompliance: “I’ve been into the chillers and seen some disgusting roos people have shot, and these guys are supposed to be professionals,” said Mick Smith, a registered kangaroo shooter in the state of Victoria, Australia. For instance, in South Australia, the Annual Kangaroo Harvest Program reports from 2019-2023 noted that all inspections occurred exclusively at chillers. These chiller inspections were scheduled, allowing operators to prepare for visits. Tellingly, the reports describe these inspections as “field trips” focused on “maintaining relationships with field processors” rather than compliance monitoring. There were no unannounced inspections during this five-year period, leaving the initial processing chain unmonitored and creating conditions fundamentally incompatible with modern food safety standards.

The onus to prove food safety should rest squarely with the commercial kangaroo meat industry. The critical question is whether we can confidently give the green tick to every stage of the commercial kangaroo meat production chain, starting from the unsupervised shooting in remote fields, through the unmonitored field processing, to the inadequately inspected chillers. This report demonstrates that we cannot.

4.2 COMPANION ANIMAL HEALTH RISKS

The pet food industry promotes kangaroo meat as a "novel protein" that is safe and suitable for pets with food sensitivities. But this is a misleading marketing label. Companies that sell kangaroo meat in pet food rely on the same reassuring language and marketing claims promoted by the industry itself. Claims such as "strict food safety standards" and "ethical sourcing" (Addiction Wild Kangaroo Feast pet food) are presented to consumers as guarantees of quality and responsibility. Yet as the contamination data and oversight failures documented in this report make clear, these assurances have no verifiable basis.

The same ethical and food safety failures, contamination risks, and lack of oversight that plague kangaroo meat destined for human consumption also apply to pet food products. In fact, contamination risks for pet food containing kangaroo meat are worse because of a lack of adequate screening. Not only does this pose a risk to the wellbeing of pets, but it also presents the risk of secondary transmission of pathogens to humans. For example, the documented presence of Salmonella in kangaroo meat, a risk that according to veterinarians is often heightened in raw pet food diets, can expose pet owners to severe health consequences, including gastroenteritis and septicemia. In addition to harboring potentially dangerous pathogens, kangaroo meat has been known to contain sulfur dioxide (a preservative used to mask signs of putrefaction) and cause health problems such as thiamine deficiency potentially leading to brain damage in dogs and cats.

Dr. Andrew Knight, a veterinary professor of animal welfare at Griffith University in Queensland and Fellow of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, underscores the scale of the scientific evidence against raw pet food diets, emphasizing the increased risk from kangaroo meat: "As of 2026, there are more than 80 studies showing increased pathogenic hazards associated with raw meat pet diets," he says. "Concerns associated with the use of kangaroo meat could be even greater, because these animals have no pre-slaughter health screening, and because the hygiene standards applied within abattoirs cannot be achieved when animals are killed and processed in the field."

The documented history of food safety failures in kangaroo meat raises serious concerns for pet food products. Russia's 2009 ban on imports, triggered by unsafe E. coli levels, underscores the scale of the problem. High E. coli contamination has been extensively documented in kangaroo meat. One study of minced meat at South Australian processing plants found an overall prevalence of 70%, while another investigation found rates as high as 100% in fillet meat (cuts from a single carcass) and 89% in manufactured meat (cuts from multiple carcasses resulting in products such as mince).

Contamination extends beyond E. coli. Research has documented the presence of Coxiella burnetii, the causative agent of Q fever, in kangaroo meat, with strains genetically identical to those found in human Q fever patients in Australia, suggesting kangaroo meat as a potential transmission pathway.

These risks are compounded by critical gaps in surveillance. In 2016-17, over 100,000 kangaroos died in a mass mortality event, yet government agencies failed to investigate or take samples to confirm the cause of death. Given that kangaroo meat was entering domestic and export markets for human and pet consumption at the time, the absence of investigation is difficult to justify: why did the responsible agencies not act to identify the pathogen and assess food chain risk? The fact that the cause of this mass die-off, and others like it, remains unidentified should be of significant concern to consumers of kangaroo products, including pet owners.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Often referred to as "ecological engineers," kangaroos play an integral role in the health of Australia's landscape. These large marsupials have coevolved with Australian ecosystems for around 20 million years. Yet despite their ecological significance, the commercial kangaroo industry frames their mass killing as environmentally beneficial, sustainable, and even essential.

The commercial kangaroo industry markets its product as a low-emission alternative to beef and lamb, citing the fact that individual kangaroos produce less methane than ruminants. This comparison is misleading. Unlike livestock, kangaroos cannot be farmed or scaled to meet demand. The industry depends entirely on extracting wild animals from their native habitats and for a commercial, market-driven use. It cannot replicate or replace conventional meat supply chains; commercial hunting of even the most abundant large mammals is not sustainable on a planet with eight billion people. The argument amounts to greenwashing: real climate benefits require reducing ruminant consumption, not substituting one meat source with an unscalable wild kill.

Any marginal methane benefit is far outweighed by ecosystem damage and biodiversity loss caused by large-scale kangaroo killing. Kangaroos are keystone native Australian herbivores who play a crucial ecological role in vegetation management, nutrient cycling, biodiversity support, and bushfire mitigation, reducing the size and spread of grassland fires. Recent scientific research has suggested that kangaroos have a positive effect on soil health and native vegetation, helping improve the restoration of degraded grasslands.

The commercial kill is not sustainable. Scientists caution that once local extinctions occur, kangaroo populations may not be replenishable.

The 1.4 tonnes of lead bullets dispersed annually by commercial shooters into the rangelands create a persistent toxic legacy affecting soil, water sources, wildlife, and human communities. Kangaroo carcasses and offcuts containing lead bullets and bullet fragments pose lethal risks to scavenging native mammals, birds, and other wildlife that feed on the carcasses, creating secondary poisoning pathways through the food web.

The commercial kill is not sustainable. Kangaroo populations are not "overabundant," and the concentrated killing of kangaroos in certain areas may lead to extirpation. Scientists caution that once local extinctions occur, kangaroo populations may not be replenishable. Moreover, according to wildlife biologists, industry assertions that kangaroos compete with livestock are not scientifically supported. To the contrary, kangaroos often avoid livestock when possible and the lethal removal of kangaroos from agricultural land is not associated with increased pastoral productivity. The industry's claims that kangaroo populations are at pest levels stem from discredited historical eradication policies driven by livestock industry interests. Objective scientific evidence shows minimal competition between kangaroos and livestock, with damage largely attributable to poor land management and overgrazing by cattle and sheep.

The true scale of kangaroo deaths - including wounded animals, non-commercial shooting, road accidents, and killed dependent young - remains unknown, a problem further obscured by the questionable population estimates underpinning commercial quotas. This uncertainty is compounded by increasing drought frequency and severity, coupled with emerging disease threats, which make kangaroo populations increasingly vulnerable. Yet despite

these knowledge gaps and mounting environmental pressures, extraction continues without adequate assessment of cumulative impacts. Adding to existing population pressures, the proportion of females in the commercial kill is also increasing, leading to even more dependent joey deaths by blunt force, decapitation or starvation. The mass killing of this keystone herbivore therefore represents a direct contradiction to conservation imperatives and risks exacerbating ecosystem instability.

These contradictions are playing out in policy. The states of South Australia and Victoria have opened their national parks to a state-sanctioned commercial kangaroo kill, fundamentally undermining the purpose of protected areas and setting dangerous precedents for wildlife management in conservation landscapes. There is discussion in New South Wales, a state where the most kangaroos are shot, about whether to follow suit. This raises the question: why would state governments allow commercial shooting of kangaroos in national parks if kangaroo populations outside them are over-abundant? While New South Wales, Queensland, and Western Australia currently have laws prohibiting this practice, these states face increasing pressure to open their parks; a development that would further erode the integrity of Australia's protected area network and accelerate the ecological damage already being inflicted by the kangaroo industry.

6. ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICS

Australia's commercial kangaroo kill constitutes the world's largest slaughter of land-based wildlife. Since 2010, the industry has killed over 20 million adult kangaroos, averaging 1.5 million annually, not including the hundreds of thousands of dependent joeys killed each year as collateral. The commercial kangaroo meat industry in Australia operates under a carefully constructed narrative that promotes and even guarantees "humane" killing, food safety, and environmental benefits. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The industry, represented by the Australian Wild Game Industry Council (AWGIC), formerly the Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia, presents itself to domestic and international markets as maintaining the strictest health and safety standards. It markets kangaroo meat as an "environmentally friendly" protein and as a healthy alternative to livestock for both human and pet food consumption. According to AWGIC's own website, every step of the process is monitored from "harvest" to export, with regular third-party inspections said to ensure compliance with Australian food safety and welfare standards. These false claims have enabled the industry to access export markets and tap into government assistance.

Kangaroo shooters are expected to adhere to the National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes. A peer-reviewed analysis of enforcement practices across all states in Australia found that not a single agency responsible for regulating the commercial kangaroo industry inspects shooters consistently. Government advisory board reports state that it is "difficult to monitor animal welfare outcomes in the field" due to the reluctance of compliance staff to be in the field at night when firearms are in use. Therefore, the industry's central claim of humane killing has no verification whatsoever - no inspector, no observer, and no oversight exists at the point of kill to confirm that a single animal dies in accordance with the Code of Practice.

One of the Code's requirements is that kangaroos be killed by a direct shot to the head. Research documents widespread failures to achieve instant death through head shots. Body shots, wounding, and extended suffering are common. Academic experts report up to a 40% misshot rate (non-headshot). Night shooting conditions, variable shooter skill, and

A peer-reviewed analysis of enforcement practices across all states in Australia found that not a single agency responsible for regulating the commercial kangaroo industry inspects shooters consistently.

complete absence of oversight at kill sites make adhering to the Code of Practice impossible to guarantee or verify. And an intentional disregard for established protocols by some shooters is evidenced by their failing to achieve the objective of instantaneous loss of consciousness and rapid death, as specified by the Code. Incontrovertible evidence was provided in the 2025 documentary, Chasing Roo, by filmmaker Skye Fitzgerald. In the film, a commercial shooter cuts off the paws and feet of a kangaroo while he is alive and hangs him on a truck. "We'll keep going and we'll gut him up later. We'll let him die," he says. The wounded animal then lifts himself, vainly attempting to escape the leg hold. It is widely known that shooters don't follow protocols to ensure quick death, reportedly to avoid the cost of an additional bullet. Additionally, they are paid per kilo, creating financial incentives to prioritize speed over humane killing.

Government records obtained under Freedom of Information substantiate this pattern with firsthand evidence from the supply chain itself. For the 2025 calendar year, the department's own gunshot wound incident reports document at least 24 separate carcasses detected with body shots rather than head shots, and that is only the number flagged by on-plant veterinarians at the point of processing, after each animal had already been shot, field-dressed, transported, and stored in a chiller. Every one of these carcasses represents a kangaroo that the National Code of Practice required to be killed instantly with a single shot to the head and was not.

The wound descriptions recorded in these reports are graphic and strikingly consistent. One carcass was logged with "heavy bruising across the neck, back, and shoulders." "The neck is broken" and "it was not possible to pass a rod through the carcass due to excessive hemorrhage and broken bones," the on-site veterinarian noted. Another was recorded as "bruising right forequarter with hole and broken back," with a large piece of shrapnel embedded in the armpit, with its ribs fractured and its back broken. A third carcass had "two holes through thoracic [chest] cavity with heavy bruising on the forequarter," with the examining veterinarian noting "many shattered bones in the shoulder." By the final reported incident of the year, a carcass was logged simply as "the neck was completely missing including vertebrae extending towards the shoulder." Across these reports, veterinarians repeatedly describe passing a rod through entry and exit wounds to trace the bullet's path across the body cavity, alongside findings of broken vertebrae and fractured ribs. Even a 16 kg female, a small animal, likely a juvenile, was among those recorded with a body-shot wound to the thoracic cavity.

Despite the department providing a detailed written description of each wound in these incident reports, it redacted the accompanying photographs of those same wounds from the documents released. The authors of this report sought an internal review of this decision, arguing, among other things, that the photographs were inseparable from the narrative descriptions already disclosed and that the department's stated justification - that disclosure could damage relations between the Commonwealth and the states responsible for animal welfare regulation - was unsupported. On July 31, 2026, the department's internal reviewer affirmed the original decision, again relying on the risk of damage to Commonwealth-State relations as grounds for withholding the photographs. The authors have since lodged an independent review of this decision with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

Every one of these reports is evidence of non-compliance. Body shots and prolonged, wounded deaths are not rare exceptions identified through exceptional vigilance - they are a routine occurrence that the system only catches, if at all, once the animal has already been shot, gutted, transported, and chilled.

Despite all the evidence, the AWGIC holds steady with its denials. In an email to the Center for a Humane Economy on Aug. 13, 2026, AWGIC executive officer Neal Finch stated, "Credible research suggests at least 96% of kangaroos harvested for commercial use are killed instantaneously with a single shot to the brain." He added that the commercial killing of kangaroos is "the world's most regulated, transparent, and humane broadscale wildlife management program."

Kangaroos are sentient beings with the demonstrated capacity to experience pain and suffering, engage in positive subjective experiences, and have goal-directed behaviors. Recent scientific advances have expanded our understanding of sentience beyond simple pain perception to include emotional states and cognitive capacities. The commercial killing of kangaroos causes extreme fear and inflicts profound harm on these sentient animals on multiple levels. Adult kangaroos experience terror during pursuit and shooting, prolonged suffering from non-fatal wounds, and agonizing deaths when head shots fail. Exemplified by the image below, taken during a routine kangaroo hunt, field and video evidence has demonstrated instances where still-alive adult kangaroos are strung up on shooter vehicles after being dismembered, intentionally mutilated and left to suffer extreme pain while conscious.



A still image from the 2025 documentary, Chasing Roo. It documents the moment a still-conscious, dismembered kangaroo was strung up by its hind legs from a hoist on the back of a shooter's vehicle, its forelimbs reaching toward the ground as it struggled in a final attempt to escape.

Watch the Trailer Here.

The pursuit of kangaroos compromises their welfare as they are highly susceptible to capture myopathy from fleeing. Myopathy is a stress-induced disease that causes rapid muscle breakdown, paralysis, and even death, sometimes within days or weeks of onset. So even the kangaroos who survive being shot at and chased may not survive the experience.

The psychological trauma extends beyond the physical: disruption of social stability destroys established relationships and community structures within kangaroo populations. Dependent joeys witness the shooting of their mothers before facing their own deaths through methods that cause extreme suffering, such as being bludgeoned to death. Young at-foot joeys experience the trauma of seeing their mothers killed, then endure prolonged deaths from starvation, exposure, and predation after fleeing in terror. The industry's systematic infliction of suffering on sentient wildlife, including both immediate physical pain and extended psychological trauma, represents a profound ethical failure that cannot be reconciled with contemporary understanding of animal sentience and welfare.



A dependent joey killed as collateral of the commercial kangaroo meat industry - one of an estimated 400,000 to 800,000 joeys condemned to die each year.

Photo Credit: Jane Gibb. Photo Source: Kangaroo Truth

Since 2020, the average annual kill count has fallen to approximately 1.3 million per year. Even so, official tallies understate the true toll, since they exclude the hundreds of thousands of dependent joeys killed across the country and discarded as "by-catch" of this industry each year. Around 25% to 30% of kangaroos killed annually are adult females (with estimates varying between states and species). Four states do not require records of joey deaths. Victoria, the only state requiring commercial shooters to report dependent young, has consistently shown that just under one in-pouch joey is killed for every adult female. If this ratio held true across other states, the figures suggest 400,000 to 450,000 joeys killed annually. Previous estimates place this figure even higher with up to 280,000 young at-foot and up to 783,000 in-pouch young becoming collateral kill of the industry.

A portion of this joey toll can be attributed to a market not previously scrutinized - the greyhound racing industry. Supplying Australia's 10,000-15,000 active racing greyhounds with kangaroo meat is estimated to result in the killing of tens of thousands of joeys each year, a toll that has occurred with no public accounting and no apparent oversight of the supply chain connecting the two industries.

Prescribed killing methods for joeys are heinous. They include cervical dislocation, decapitation, and blunt force trauma. These methods have been acknowledged in veterinary literature as unreliable and inhumane, particularly for larger joeys, leading to prolonged suffering and failed attempts. Joey deaths are rarely recorded, even in Victoria, meaning the actual death count is substantially higher. Furthermore, video evidence collected during routine commercial killing shows shooters leaving the young to die.

Taken directly out of the industry's playbook, misleading pet food marketing claims such as "Delivering wild, humanely sourced kangaroo," by companies like Zignature Kangaroo Formula (sold in the United States), fail to reflect the reality of an industry that has no way of meeting humane slaughter compliance. U.S. consumers encountering "humanely sourced" claims reasonably assume a level of oversight and accountability comparable to domestic animal welfare certifications. No such framework exists for kangaroo meat - the claim is unauditable by design as no independent observers are present at the point of kill and the evidence that does exist points to systemic non-compliance.

Although there is a Code of Practice for the commercial killing of kangaroos, compliance is severely lacking. Unlike any other meat industry, kangaroo killing occurs in remote locations at night with no independent witnesses, no inspections at the point of kill, and no field verification of adherence to the prescribed Code. While shooters must submit returns and use tags, compliance in-field is monitored only through desktop reviews. No other meat production system in Australia operates with such minimal welfare standards or such complete absence of accountability.

Multiple animal welfare assessments show no improvement in welfare outcomes, indicating inherent rather than isolated problems. The commercial kangaroo meat industry is fundamentally inhumane due to both its killing methodology and systemic animal welfare violations. These features are intrinsic to the industry's structure and cannot be ameliorated through regulatory reform. The industry's practices are increasingly recognized internationally as unacceptable, posing a reputational liability for other Australian exports.



A young at-foot joey who was bludgeoned to death after the shooting of a female kangaroo. These joeys are "waste products" to the industry, presenting no commercial value, condemned to suffer appalling mistreatment and death.

Photo Source: Kangaroo Truth

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Calls to Action

1. **The U.S. Food and Drug Administration** should declare kangaroo meat, whether intended for human consumption or as an ingredient in pet food, unfit for sale in the United States, based on the pathogen, parasite, and contamination findings presented in this report. Regulatory equivalents in EU member countries and Canada should do the same.

2. **Food-safety regulators from other nations** should refuse kangaroo meat imports. Belgium, as the single largest importer of Australian kangaroo meat and pet food exports and the primary economic force sustaining this trade, should ban imports of this bushmeat. Canada is also propping up the industry even though kangaroo bushmeat cannot possibly meet the nation's food safety standards.

3. **Vietnam** should reverse the recent bilateral arrangement that now permits kangaroo meat imports into the country.

4. **The American Veterinary Medical Association** (AVMA) should issue guidance addressing the food safety risks and sustainability issues of kangaroo-based pet food, taking into account the size of the global pet population, rather than giving credence to the "novel protein" and "sustainable" marketing claims made by the industry.

5. **Australian regulators** should mandate warning labels on kangaroo meat products sold domestically, disclosing the documented risks of bacterial, parasitic, and viral contamination so domestic consumers are not denied the information available to inform their choice.

6. **Australia** should ban greyhound racing in recognition that the dog-racing industry provides substantial financial support to commercial kangaroo shooting, which orphans joeys and poisons countless wild animals due to massive lead dispersal by shooters.

7. **Major Australian and international supermarket chains and pet food retailers** should voluntarily discontinue kangaroo meat and kangaroo-based pet food products based on documented health risks to consumers and pets.

8. Like the world's largest athleticwear companies, **other companies that glamorize kangaroo leather** - including Dainese and Alpinestars in gloves and racing suits - should end production of clothing and other wares and opt for ethical, sustainable, and higher-performing material alternatives.

7.2 LONG-TERM POLICY DIRECTION

Based on the findings of the report and the calls to action, the authors suggest a long-term policy direction requiring a fundamental reassessment of whether this industry should continue to operate at all.

The Australian government should independently:

- Be fully transparent with kangaroo population data, food safety testing results, economic data, and kill numbers for commercial and non-commercial takes of kangaroos. Records should be in the public domain.
- Undertake regulatory reform to ensure accountability of the commercial kangaroo industry and establish independent oversight that includes the public as stakeholders.
- Transition from exploitation to coexistence through development of non-lethal alternatives and international best practices for human-wildlife coexistence.
- Beyond Australia, the authors call for parallel action from importing countries and industry:
- The United States, Belgium, the European Union, Canada, Vietnam, and other countries should stop kangaroo imports through legislation.
- Investors, retailers, consumer advocacy groups, and animal welfare organizations should press companies to adopt corporate responsibility initiatives phasing out kangaroo products.
- Health standards for pet food (domestic and international) should be created, with oversight to ensure all wild-caught and domestically bred meat is safe for animals. If that assurance cannot be made, wild-caught animal carcasses should be phased out of pet food.

7.3 STAKEHOLDER IMPLICATIONS

For International Policymakers: This report provides evidence to support import restrictions based on minimal economic importance, legitimate food safety, animal welfare, and environmental concerns. In the case of the United States, the authors recommend a complete federal ban on the import of kangaroo parts (in the form of pet food or kangaroo products for human consumption).

For Corporate Stakeholders: Kangaroo meat products represent significant ethical, reputational, and potential liability risks. The commercial kill does not comply with The Five Freedoms that guide much corporate policy regarding use of animals. While many Western countries are now adopting animal welfare policies, Australia continues to slaughter its native wildlife - calling it humane. The authors recommend complete product discontinuation.

For the Australian Government: Public health protection, animal welfare obligations, and environmental responsibilities demand immediate action to investigate and phase out this commercial kill industry.

For the Public: Consumers of kangaroo meat (humans and companion animals) are exposed to health risks. Public awareness and education campaigns will help consumers make informed decisions.

CONCLUSIONS



The commercial kangaroo meat industry markets itself as humane, safe, and sustainable. The evidence presented in this report demonstrates it is none of these things. Instead, it shows that kangaroo meat poses serious public health risks, including a growing pandemic potential, and operates through institutionalized cruelty while falsely claiming environmental credentials.

The industry has been permitted to continue through the prioritization of narrow economic interests over the public good. What is needed is comprehensive, independent investigation, full transparency, genuine public participation in decision-making, and serious consideration of whether this industry should exist at all.

The data presented in this report reveal an uncomfortable truth: it is European demand, and Belgium in particular, that is keeping Australia's commercial kangaroo killing trade alive. With three of the world's largest economies refusing to sell or having a virtually non-existent market for it, the commercial kangaroo meat industry would have likely collapsed entirely were it not for European buyers. Belgium alone accounts for over half of all EU-bound kangaroo meat exports and dominates over 82% of the pet food export market. The EU collectively receives more than half of all exported kangaroo meat. Put simply, Belgian purchasing power is financing the continuation of the world's largest commercial land-based wildlife slaughter, an industry rejected by two of the world's biggest economies. European policymakers, particularly in Belgium, must acknowledge that their market is not a passive participant in this trade; it is the primary force sustaining it. For the United States, the implication is clear: with imports already negligible, a federal ban on kangaroo products would carry virtually no economic cost while sending an unequivocal signal that the world's largest commercial wildlife slaughter can no longer count on access to American markets.

The risks to public health are too great and the suffering of kangaroos too extensive to continue business as usual. This report serves as a call to action for policymakers, corporate decision-makers, and the public to demand fundamental change. Evidence presented here should compel the reader to envision a different future: one based on coexistence rather than exploitation, transparency rather than secrecy, informed choice rather than lack of knowledge, and genuine sustainability rather than greenwashing.

This report also documents for the first time a further symptom of the kangaroo meat industry's terminal economic decline: its growing dependence on supplying cheap meat to Australia's greyhound racing industry, itself a declining and publicly unpopular activity. The fact that a commercial wildlife-killing enterprise increasingly depends on feeding another widely condemned industry only reinforces the case for its end.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the many individuals and organizations whose contributions, expertise, and dedication made this report possible. We thank Cheryl Curtis; Ann De Greef, Ina Paitjan, and the team at GAIA; Andrew Knight, B.Sc., BVMS, Ph.D. (Griff.), Ph.D. (Winch.), MANZCVS, DipECAWBM (AWSEL), DipACAW, FRCVS, and PFHEA; Alyssa Wormald and the Victorian Kangaroo Alliance; Peter and Andrea Hylands of Nature Knowledge Channel; Lisa Baker, honorary senior research fellow at Murdoch University; filmmaker Skye Fitzgerald; Galina Hale, professor of economics; Cienwen Hickey of Australia's Kangaroos; Daniel Ramp, Ph.D.; Dror Ben-Ami, Ph.D.; Sienna Watson, policy and parliamentary adviser to Sen. Mehreen Faruqi, deputy leader of the Australian Greens and a senator for New South Wales; Melissa Harrison and Elle Trahair of Free the Hounds; Simone Pavesi, Dalla Parte Degli Animali; and Christine Ann Dorchak, Carey Theil, and Patrick Baga of GREY2K USA Worldwide.

The authors also acknowledge the prior work of co-author Tina Lawrence, B.Juris., LL.B., an adviser to the Australian Kangaroo Alliance, which informed this report.

AUSTRALIA'S GLOBAL BUSHMEAT TRADE



Photo credit: Peter and Andrea Hylands of Creative Cowboy Films

CENTER FOR A HUMANE ECONOMY

Report prepared and published for the Center for a Humane Economy

www.centerforahumaneeconomy.org