

ONLINE ARTICLE

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THE owner of an Elmore livestock transport company has been fined \$10,000, without conviction, for cruelty to animals.

Gavin O’Sullivan, 62, faced the Bendigo Magistrates Court yesterday on charges brought by the Department of Primary Industries.

The court heard that on May 3, 2010, at the Bendigo saleyards, four sheep in the care of O’Sullivan’s Transport were seen to be “severely distressed and disabled”.

A saleyards officer ordered for them to be humanely destroyed, but their wishes were blocked by O’Sullivan.

The court was told the sheep were not fit for transport and were eventually secured by sale yards staff.

When the lame sheep were destroyed and subsequently tested by DPI staff their legs were found to be fractured with significant joint damage.

On August 16, 2010, two more disabled sheep, with severe injuries, were seen in the care of O’Sullivan’s transport. On both occasions the sheep were being transported from primary producers around Wagga Wagga to an abattoir at Stawell.

O’Sullivan was charged with failure to provide veterinary care, not humanely destroying the animals, and containing them in manner likely to cause further harm.

O’Sullivan’s defence lawyer said his client had no knowledge of the particular injured sheep, and said crippled sheep were “part of the industry”.

But Magistrate Ian von Einem said it was O’Sullivan’s responsibility to make sure his workers complied with guidelines on the safe and humane transport of livestock.

“This is conveying sheep that are obviously in pain,” he said.

“Animals are being transported that shouldn’t be transported.

“One disturbing part of this is they have tried to reload them.”

O’Sullivan originally pleaded not guilty to the charges, but when Mr von Einem offered a fine and non-conviction he changed his plea.