China has suspended beef exports from another Queensland abattoir – a day after Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced he will [legislate to tear up Victoria’s multimillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative agreement with Beijing](https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/morrison-to-tear-up-victorias-belt-and-road-initiative-deal-with-beijing/news-story/ec1fa27c29897246b6b152420d004a0f) and a raft of other agreements found to be against the national interest.

Chinese customs has suspended beef imports from Australian processor John Dee Warwick – the oldest single-family owned meat processor in Australia – based in Warwick in Queensland’s southeast.

The abattoir, which has a feedlot licensed for 25,000 head of cattle, is located in the heartland of Agriculture Minister David Littleproud’s seat of Maranoa.

According to a Chinese customs authority, the banned drug chloramphenicol was found in the beef from the company. Chinese customs officials have notified their Australian counterparts asking them to launch an investigation into the company and report back to China in 45 days.

“In order to ensure the safety of imported meat products, the customs has officially notified Australia to suspend the export of the company to China, and requires Australia to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the relevant company within 45 days and provide feedback to the Chinese side,” a translation of a statement by the China customs authority said.

The suspension was also reported in Chinese state media.

Warwick is the fifth Queensland abattoir that China has banned exports from. Relations between Australia and China, its biggest trading partner, have reached a low ebb, with Beijing targeting various Australian exports from barley to wine over Mr Morrison’s push for an inquiry into the origins of coronavirus.

The ban was at odds with a recent sampling test report that proves a satisfactory quality of John Dee beef imported to China.

According to a sampling result statement published by Shanghai Municipal Administration for Market Regulation on June 30, M4-5 ribeye steak in a 200g package, imported from John Dee Warwick met the quality requirement for agricultural food.

The sampling product reportedly came from a major franchised supermarket in Shanghai, Greenland Youxian. Other John Dee products can be found at imported meat specialty shops on Chinese e-Commerce platforms including JD.com and Alibaba-owned Tmall and Taobao.

According to Chinese media, online grocery retailer Yihaodian found that imported beef has become one of the fastest growing sought-after products in major cities in China in the week leading to the traditional Qixi festival - a Chinese version of Valentines’ Day - on Tuesday, and other products include red wine.

Imported beef combo in packages or boxes has also emerged as a new fad for gifting family and friends among the country’s metropolitan middle class consumers. The negative media coverage around Australian beef’s quality in China, as well as the 45 days of investigation period mean that it may affect the perception and sales of other Australian beef products in the market. The market for meant is heading towards a high consumption season, the Moon Festival, which also coincides with a week-long China’s National Day public holiday started on the 1st October.

***‘A bad marriage’***

Beijing’s deputy ambassador to Australia, [Wang Xining, has likened the worsening relations to a bad marriage](https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/thousand-talents-spreads-sunshine-on-china-ties-deputy-ambassador-wang-xining-claims/news-story/8435dcc5192dd48d8990acd724eff7f8) and said Mr Morrison had offended the Chinese people over his push for in inquiry into COVID-19, the outbreak of which began in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

Furthermore, Mr Wang said Australia had effectively stabbed China in the back, drawing parallels with the Shakespearean tragedy Julius Caesar.

“It hurt the feelings of the Chinese people,” Mr Wang said. “I think it is approximately identical to Julius Caesar on his final day, when he saw Brutus approaching him, (and said): ‘Et tu Brute’.”

“It is no easy task to keep a relationship in good shape. Married couples know how hard it is.”

This month Beijing launched a [fresh anti-dumping investigation into Australian wine](https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/economics/china-launches-antidumping-probe-into-australian-wine/news-story/942e43ff8e81207c83ef26b30e6f54ec), sending shares in ASX-listed Treasury Wine Estates into a tailspin. The wine producer’s shares have plummeted 27 per cent from a high of $12.85 this month to $9.35.

The anti-dumping probe – which will examine if Australia sold wine to China too cheaply – comes months after Beijing imposed punitive 80 per cent tariffs on Australian Barley after a similar investigation.

But Mr Morrison has stood firm against Beijing, announcing on Thursday he would legislate to tear up Victoria’s multimillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative agreement with Beijing, creating laws that will also ban a raft of other deals with foreign governments found to be against the ­national interest.

In a major flexing of its constitutional powers, the Morrison government will cast its net over all foreign relations agreements struck by lower tiers of government, amid fears that national security has been compromised by often secret deals between state governments and foreign powers.

The move could have rippling effects for the private sector, with the Foreign Minister given powers to review any private infrastructure contracts that a state government signed as part of a BRI agreement with China.

The list of agreements that could be scrapped under the proposed legislation will range from sister city agreements, popular with local governments, to memorandum of understanding deals and include all legally and non-­legally binding arrangements.

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