



The Welfare of Transported Animals



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Campaign to stop the long distance transport of animals

Questions and answers

Why is Eurogroup launching a campaign on live animal transport?

Every year millions of pigs, sheep and cattle are transported across Europe, for many, those destined for slaughter, it is their last journey. Many animals have to endure long journeys, some for 3 to 5 days, often in overloaded, badly ventilated trucks with no food and water. The suffering of animals in transit is well reported by animal welfare groups and by the European Commission's own inspectorate, the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO)¹. Thirst, hunger, exhaustion and traumatic injuries often cause extreme suffering and occasionally mortalities. Negligence and brutal handling of the animals add to the distress.

Existing legislation does not provide enough protection to transported animals especially over long distances. Furthermore, this legislation is not properly enforced by Member States, nor respected by transporters. This was clearly shown by the European Commission's report on the implementation of the transport legislation by Member States². The trade in live cattle from the EU to third countries causes severe welfare problems during transport and at slaughter and is only commercially possible through the payment of export subsidies.

The recent report by the Commission's Scientific Committee³ has also identified live transport as a source of the spread of diseases such as Foot & Mouth. It concludes that the current legislation has to be improved. Eurogroup is of the opinion that a major change of policy is needed when the European Commission will be amending the Transport Directive in 2002.

What is the existing legislation?

Under present EU law⁴, animals may travel for a maximum of eight hours, unless they are transported in a special vehicle, in which case there is no journey time limit but only 24 hours resting intervals after 24 to 29 hours travel according to the category of animals. Then the animals have to be unloaded at an authorized staging point to be fed, watered and rested for 24 hours after which the journey can continue. Journeys of several days from the Netherlands to Greece or from Germany to the Middle East are not uncommon.

The criteria for the special vehicles are also inadequate. For example these vehicles are not obliged to have a system of forced mechanical ventilation. Therefore, movement of air is only guaranteed if the vehicle is moving.

¹Food and Veterinary reports: http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/inspections/vi/reports/index_en.html

²Com (2000) 809 final on the implementation of Directive 95/29/EC

³Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare – The welfare of animals during transport – 11 March 2002

⁴Directive 95/29/EC amending Directive 91/628 on the protection of animals during transport
Regulation 411/98 on standards applicable to road vehicles on journeys exceeding eight hours
Regulation 125 5/97 criteria for staging points and amending the route plan

Which are the main violations of the law?

- Inadequate transport vehicles, with either no or inadequate watering and ventilation
- Illegal route plans and non-compliance with feeding, resting and watering provisions
- Overloaded vehicles
- Transport of sick and injured animals
- Insufficient controls by Member States at the place of departure and during transport

What are Eurogroup's main demands?

The Directive should lead to animals being slaughtered as near as possible to the point of rearing and the live trade being replaced by a carcass trade. The new law should include :

- A limit of maximum 8 hours for the road transport of animals for slaughter and further fattening
- For journeys beyond 8 hours:
 - more space so that all animals can lie down at the same time during travel
 - vehicles should have forced ventilation
 - a veterinarian should be present when loading
- Training and licensing of transporters
- Solipeds such as horses should be transported in individual compartments

What are the main conclusions of the European Commission's Scientific report ?

- Loading and unloading are very stressful to animals particularly those not accustomed to transport. For such animals transport should be avoided and journeys kept as short as possible
- For longer journeys: more space for the animals to lie down at the same time and without being walked upon
- Journeys should be limited to 8 hrs unless the vehicle allows for every individual animal to be inspected
- All horses to be transported in individual compartments
- Improved vehicle standards including forced ventilation and a ban on the use of steep loading ramps
- A ban on the use of electric goads

Who will take the final decision?

The European Parliament (EP) will prepare a report on the Commission's proposal. Previous opinions⁵ from the EP have been strongly in favour of a maximum journey time limit. However it is the Council of Agriculture Ministers of the European Union who will take the final decision under the Danish (July to Dec 2002) or the Greek Presidency (January-June 2003). Eurogroup's campaign is directed to the governments of the Member States. Ministers from Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium and UK have already expressed support for a maximum time limit for slaughter animals.

⁵Jan Maat report A5-0347/2001 (<http://www.europarl.eu.int>)

Introduction

In December 2000 the Commission published a Report on the implementation of the Transport Directive in Member States. It highlighted the failure of most Member States to properly enforce the Directive. In addition there was evidence of illegal route plans and non-compliance with travelling time limits, poor handling of animals, transport of unfit animals and overloading. Many vehicles were inadequate and ventilation on road vehicles was insufficient.

It is clear that very little has changed during the last 10 years in spite of stricter conditions being laid down under various Directive changes.

The explanatory statement in the Commission's Proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 91/628/EEC which was published in July 1993 contained the following comments:

“The report of the Scientific Veterinary Committee notes that road transport is, in general, worse for the animals than rail, sea or air transport and that the transport for slaughter animals is usually worse than for other animals”.

Later in this explanatory statement is the following, significant comment: “Article 13(3) of the Directive requires the Commission to submit a report to the Council, three years after the implementation of the provisions of the Directive, on experience acquired by the Member States particularly as regards to the provisions referred to above. Should this experience show that certain transporters are continuing systematically to disregard these basic welfare provisions, the Commission would have to reconsider the question of limiting journey times to slaughter and for further fattening.”

The Commission's report (COM (2000) 809) shows that certain transporters are continuing to disregard the rules, that Member States give a low level of priority to enforcing the Directive, that the Commission has insufficient monitoring resources to change Member States' attitude and that animals, particularly those going for slaughter, are continuing to be badly and sometimes cruelly treated.

The recent foot and mouth disease outbreak put the widespread practice of transporting animals over long distances under critical scrutiny. In a press statement on 17 February 1998, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisations warned “Europe may face further animal disease epidemics due to long distance transport and increasingly dense livestock units.” The warning was ignored.

The opportunity has now arisen for the Commission and Member States to introduce radical changes to those transport rules in order to improve the welfare of animals and reduce the risk of spreading diseases.

It is also relevant to point out that the Treaty Protocol on Animal Welfare agreed at Amsterdam makes it legally binding for the Community and Member States to pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals when formulating and implementing the Community's Transport Policy.

Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare (SCAHAW)

In March 2002 the SCAHAW published a report on the welfare of farm animals during transport. The Committee reviewed all available research on this issue and addressed a number of welfare issues. It is the European Commission's intention to use this report and the scientific information therein as a basis for new proposals to amend the transport Directives.

The report consulted over 300 scientific references and made 55 recommendations. There was also an Executive Summary and it contains the following significant statement:

“Since loading and transport are stressful to animals unaccustomed to them, for these animals, transport should be avoided wherever possible and journeys should be as short as possible.”

Virtually all commercially reared farm animals would not be accustomed to transport. For the majority, the journey to the slaughterhouse may be the only journey which those animals would have to endure.

The Committee considered that the driver must be able to carry out a proper inspection of all the animals at regular intervals during the journey. If such an inspection was not possible then the journeys should be limited to eight hours.



Some of the key recommendations proposed by the SCAHAW which would improve the welfare of animals include:

- The space allowance for each animal which needs to lie during transport should allow it to adopt a comfortable lying position without a significant risk of being walked on by other animals
- Increase in space allowance for animals travelling longer than eight (pigs, horses) and twelve (cattle, sheep) hours
- Provision of forced ventilation in vehicles travelling longer than 8 hours
- New definition of fitness to travel
- All vehicles must allow proper inspection of animals
- All tiers in vehicles must have at least 1,4 m between them if journey lasts more than 8 hours
- Three deck vehicles for adult sows and boars should be prohibited
- All horses should be transported in individual stalls
- Ramps steeper than 20° should be prohibited
- All livestock vehicle drivers should receive proper training and be certified
- The use of electric goads should be prohibited

Eurogroup supports all these recommendations although we do not wish to see any road journeys of longer than eight hours except for animals going specifically for breeding purposes, for exhibition or competition. Such animals have a high monetary value and therefore, are treated with a great deal more care and are transported in better conditions.

Welfare problems during transport

Long distance transportation

Every year many millions of animals are transported on journeys lasting longer than eight hours. Almost all of these journeys are by road and the animals are mostly intended for slaughter or further fattening. A significant percentage of journeys are longer than 24 hours. There is considerable evidence to show that animals intended for slaughter suffer the worst treatment. Traumatic injuries, particularly bruising can and do occur and the effects of thirst, hunger and tiredness all contribute to animal suffering. Mortalities during long distance transport are not uncommon. The principle that animals should be slaughtered as close as possible to the farm where they were reared is frequently stated, even by some governments but very little is done to try and put it into practice.

The obvious alternative to transporting live animals over long distances to slaughter is to transport the carcasses. Eurogroup is proposing that there should be an absolute limit of 8 hours (or 500 km) on all road journeys of animals going for slaughter. The SCAHAW report shows that loading animals on to a vehicle causes great stress but, provided the vehicle is properly driven, the animals recover from that stress after some 2-3 hours. The animals "settle down" until a combination of thirst, hunger and tiredness becomes an increasing problem after around 10-12 hours.

Eight hours will allow a choice of slaughterhouses in the vast majority of cases.

Eight hours is also getting close to the time when a driver is required by the law to take a significant rest.

Animals transported for further fattening are mostly very young. Calves between 2-4 weeks of age and piglets of less than 10 weeks of age. Long distance transport stress will lower resistance to disease and interrupt normal growth.

It has also been pointed out that transporters will be able to avoid such a limit for slaughter animals by describing the shipment as animals intended for further fattening even though the period of so-called further fattening might only be 24-48 hours in a field next to the slaughterhouses.

Eurogroup is proposing, therefore, that animals going for further fattening should also be included in this 8 hour limit for journeys by road. Alternatively a much clearer and workable definition of "further fattening" must be drawn up.

Use of "special" vehicles

Under the present Directive animals can be transported for longer than eight hours provided a "special" vehicle is used. The criteria which apply to such vehicles are inadequate and imprecise, particularly in respect of ventilation.

Animals, such as high-value breeding stock, will be transported by road for longer than eight hours on occasion. Eurogroup proposes that vehicles used for this purpose must be fitted with the means to record temperature and humidity in the livestock compartments and a monitoring device in the driver's cabin. In addition all such "special" vehicles must possess either air-conditioning or a system of forced ventilation which can operate when the vehicle is stationary and be operated by a power unit which is independent of the vehicle's engine. All tiers in such vehicles must have at least 1.4 m between them.

Food, water and rest

Where animals are being transported for longer than eight hours then there will be an increasing requirement for food, water and rest. The SCAHAW report is critical of the rules in the present Directive particularly the prescribed period of one hour for food and water to be given to cattle or sheep. Scientific evidence and practical experience have shown that period to be completely inadequate. It should be at least four hours.

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The report recommends that staging points where animals can be unloaded for food, water and rest be discontinued and that animals remain on the vehicle. In such circumstances, for example, for high value breeding stock, the vehicle must visit an approved stopping-place. At such a venue, an official can verify that food and water have been administered and the correct period of rest allowed for.

The transportation of slaughter horses

The long distance trade in horses for slaughter may have reduced considerably in the last twenty years but some 150 000 live horses still enter the E.U. from Eastern Europe every year and the majority travel to Italy for slaughter. Prior to entering the E.U. the journey has been long and arduous. There is much evidence of great suffering in these transports for both adult horses and donkeys. It is difficult, if not impossible, to transport horses in large groups by road without causing suffering. The longer the distance, the greater the suffering. All horses should be transported in individual compartments and this indefensible long distance trade in slaughter horses must no longer be permitted.



Space allowances

In all types of farm animal transport there is evidence that some transporters put as many animals in the vehicle as possible with little regard to the stocking densities laid down in the present Directive. The SCAHAW report is very clear in its recommendations

in this respect. It states that animals must be given sufficient space, including sufficient head room, and that the present rules are inadequate. It is also essential that the space given to the animals is sufficient to permit a proposed inspection at regular intervals throughout the journey and, if necessary, to permit appropriate remedial action to be taken. Eurogroup is proposing that in situations where animals are permitted to travel for longer than eight hours then the SCAHAW proposals regarding space allowances must be accepted. It must also be ensured that an official veterinarian is present when such animals are loaded at the beginning of the journey in order to ensure that the rules on space allowance – and fitness to travel, are being adhered to.

Driving standards

All the rules about space allowances, bedding, ventilation etc are of little consequence to the animal if the road vehicle is badly driven. Inexperienced or careless driving of a vehicle can cause great damage to an animal resulting in unacceptable suffering. Eurogroup supports the opinion of SCAHAW that all drivers of livestock vehicles must undergo a period of training and that their competence must be assessed by an independent body. Such training should include information about the care of the animals being transported.

Roll-on Roll-off Ferries

Livestock vehicles travelling long distances frequently make use of Roll-on Roll-off Ferries in which the animals stay on the vehicle. Some of those sea journeys can last many hours. Most authorities consider this period on a ferry to be a rest period. The Directive is not clear on this issue. Wind speed and the state of the sea can influence the animals' welfare. Provided the weather conditions are good it is proposed that Roll-on Roll-off ferry crossings up to 6 hours, but no longer, can be considered as rest periods (SCAHAW report, March 2002).

Eurogroup's Principal Demands

- Transport by road of animals destined for slaughter or further fattening to be limited to 8 hours or 500 km.
- All transports of animals for breeding, exhibition etc. which are longer than 8 hours should be in "special" vehicles.
- All "special" vehicles will possess a forced ventilation system or air-conditioning
- All "special" vehicles will have a means to measure temperature and humidity in the livestock section which can be monitored in the driver's cabin
- Solipeds should only be transported in individual compartments
- Animals transported for longer than eight hours must be given sufficient space to lie down – all at the same time.
- All vehicles must allow adequate inspection of each of the animals at all times
- An official veterinarian must be present during loading for journeys of longer than eight hours in order to ensure that all the animals are fit for travel and that the stocking density is correct
- All drivers of livestock vehicles must receive training and have their competence independently assessed.
- The number of inspections to verify the adherence of regulations should be increased substantially and the procedures should be uniform throughout the Member States
- The number of Commission inspectors in the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) with responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Transport Directive must be increased substantially
- The EU should introduce a requirement for all livestock vehicles transporting animals over eight hours to be linked to a satellite navigation and positioning system such as the Global Positioning System (GPS) or the European system "Galileo".

Opinions of the European Parliament

In June 1983, the Parliament voted on an own initiative report from Frau Herklotz (PSE) on the maltreatment of horses being transported from Eastern Europe and Greece into France and Italy for slaughter. Directive 77/489/EEC on the Protection of Animals during International Transport was in force and the Parliament proposed several amendments to the Directive. They included a maximum distance of 500 km for road journeys.

The passing of the Single European Act and the lifting of border controls between Member States resulted in the Commission proposing in 1989 a new Directive to cover all transportation of all animals within the European Union. This became Directive 91/628/EEC and was subsequently amended by Directive 95/29/EC. David Morris (PSE) was the rapporteur for both reports and amongst the demands agreed by the Parliament was that road journeys for slaughter should be no more than eight hours and that a ban on the export of slaughter animals should be imposed.

In 1994 a petition of 3 ¼ million signatures proposed a general ban on the transport of horses for slaughter. In 1997 this led to an own initiative report by Mrs. Nel van Dijk (Green) which covered transport of live animals.

In November 2001 a report by Mr. Jan Maat (EPP) was adopted by a large majority. Amongst the proposals were the following:

- Animals for slaughter or further fattening not to be transported for longer than 8 hours or 500 km
- A large increase in the number of inspectors in the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO)
- Support for small regional slaughterhouses
- Driver training and certification
- Ban on export refunds for slaughter cattle



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Enforcement

The Commission's Report on the implementation of the Transport Directives by Member States (COM (2000) 809) was based on information from inspection reports from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), complaints from NGOs (in particular Eurogroup) and reports from Member States.

It was clear that if the rules were properly enforced by the competent authorities in all Member States and if transporters who contravened the rules were severely penalised and, where necessary, had their licence withdrawn, then the welfare of animals would be improved. Although good enforcement, by itself, will not solve the inherent welfare problems caused by long distance transport.

Both the competent authorities of the Member States and the European Commission have important roles to play in improving enforcement. Implementation of the following proposals is essential if enforcement is to be improved:

- **The number of Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) inspections to verify implementation of the Transport Directive by Member States should be increased substantially.** FVO inspections are a vital source of information to the Commission and Member States as to what problems exist with implementation and enforcement of the Directive.
- **Member States should present a report at least every 12 months to the Commission on the inspections that have been carried out,** indicating in particular the frequency of the inspections, the nature of the shortcomings and infringements found, the action taken to rectify the problems, and the penalties applied by the competent authorities.
- **Infringement proceedings against Member States.** The Commission must show a greater willingness to initiate and proceed with Treaty infringement proceedings against Member States. Sanctions need to be more swiftly applied and more meaningful if they are to be an effective deterrent.
- **Annual Report.** The Commission should present a detailed report to the Council and the European Parliament on the enforcement of the Directive. This report should be based on the reports received from Member States, the FVO and NGOs. Every five years this report should be accompanied by legislative proposals, based on scientific developments and analysis of practical information, in order to rectify problems identified and to keep pace with scientific developments (to be amended in a legal manner).
- **Enforcement during transit or at destination.** Member States of transit or destination should be required to inform the Member State of origin of any serious deficiencies which they find regarding route plans, vehicle standards, space allowances or the health and welfare of the animals with the purpose of enabling the Member State of origin to take steps to prevent future occurrences of such deficiencies. Member States of transit or destination should be required to adopt effective systems at places through which animals regularly pass in the course of long journeys for checking that animals are being transported in accordance with the route plan and the requirements of the Transport Directive.
- **Imports from Third Countries.** In the case of imports of live animals, compliance with Community loading and welfare standards and rules on the duration of the transport of live animals should be proven at the EU border; if infringements are noted, or if compliance with the above standards and rules cannot be proven, it should not be possible to import the live animals concerned into the Euro-

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pean Union. In order to avoid the concerning possibility that such animals will be sent back to their place of origin - possibly a long return journey in unacceptable conditions, consideration should be given to imposing a requirement that such animals should instead be unloaded, fed, watered and rested for 24 hours and, concerning slaughter animals, instead of sending them back they should be slaughtered. This would add further to the cost, delay and inconvenience, and hence could be a further incentive to comply with the rules in the first place.

- **Authorisation of Transporters.** A harmonized system of authorization for transporters should be introduced. All drivers should be required to carry on their vehicle a copy of their authorization and that of their firm.
- **Verification and Rejection of Route Plans by Member States.** Member States should verify route plans after a journey has taken place, by insisting on completed route plans being returned for checking within a specified time period after the end of the journey, and applying sanctions in the event of irregularities.

Other issues

Export refunds

The trade in live cattle from the European Union to third countries for slaughter is only made possible through a system of subsidies called export refunds. Such subsidies are also paid to encourage the export of beef carcasses. The third countries of destination for both beef and live cattle are mainly those in North Africa and the Middle East. In 1999, some 200 000 cattle were transported to third countries for slaughter.

In 1996, an independent German film producer investigated the transport of live cattle from Germany to Beirut, Lebanon and Alexandria, Egypt. The video pictures of

animals being treated with great cruelty were shocking and caused a public outcry in many parts of Europe.

The Commission's response was to propose Commission Regulation EC 615/98 which stipulates that the payment of export refunds for live cattle is subject to the transporter complying with the provisions of the transport directive. This Regulation is difficult to monitor and, furthermore, the Commission has to concede that the Community has no power to interfere in the way animals are treated in third countries. This will, of course, include the way they are slaughtered.

The export of live animals to third countries frequently involves journeys by sea. Some of the livestock vessels used to transport cattle to the Middle East and North Africa have inadequate facilities and are poorly constructed.



Slaughterhouses

Over recent years a combination of new and stricter regulations – some requiring expensive structural changes – and poor profitability have placed small and medium sized slaughterhouses at a competitive disadvantage with their larger rivals. As a consequence, a large number of slaughterhouses have closed down in recent years resulting in many animals having to endure increasingly longer journeys.

Another trend has been for some slaughterhouses to specialise in certain types of livestock. For example old sows, which have reached the end of their useful breeding life. Such specialised slaughterhouses offer a good price and therefore, pig farmers are tempted to send their animals long distances to achieve this improved financial return or may have no choice since for some classes of animals very few abattoirs remain which have the correct facilities to deal with their slaughter. To achieve a policy that animals will be slaughtered as close to the point of rearing as possible, it will be necessary not only to arrest this process but also to reverse it. There is nothing inherently wrong with small slaughterhouses, but government and EU funding may be necessary to ensure their survival and even their re-establishment in certain livestock producing areas.

Livestock Markets

By their very nature, markets are places where, at the best, animals are severely stressed and, at the worst, treated with great cruelty. Animals have to be loaded on a vehicle at the farm, transported and unloaded in a strange and unfriendly environment. They can be exposed to the elements, bedding is rarely provided, food and even water may not be available. Handling and driving of animals may often be undertaken by untrained, unskilled casual workers. After a few hours the animals are reloaded, usually in a different vehicle and transported to either a farm or slaughterhouse. It is even possible that the animals may be taken by dealers from market to market trying to achieve a greater profit. This has happened with sheep in the UK and the recent Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in the UK demonstrated how the market system contributed to the rapid spread of this disease.

There may be socio-economic reasons for holding markets but in this day and age, these are likely to be outweighed by the

animal welfare problems and the risk of spreading infectious diseases. At the very least the European Commission should carry out a survey of markets in the European Union to establish whether they still have any useful part to play in the livestock industry in Europe.

Standards of Construction of Livestock Vehicles

There are many references in the SCAHAW report which relate directly or indirectly to the design and construction of vehicles:

- Ventilation: the provision of a forced ventilation system which will operate when the vehicle is stationary and from a power source independent of the vehicle's engine. During parts of the year in Northern European countries, heat may have to be provided.
- Devices for measuring temperature and humidity in the livestock compartments with a monitoring facility in the driver's cabin.
- Construction materials for sidewalls, roof and flooring which are light weight, strong and provide good insulation.
- The design of loading ramps or hydraulic lifts.
- The height between tiers of multitiered vehicles.
- The accessibility of livestock compartments so that proper inspection can take place.

All these matters are referred to in the Commission's proposal COM (1997) 336. Many improvements were proposed at the first reading of the European Parliament. The common position from the Council is long overdue and should now be treated as a matter of urgency.

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