



TRANSPORT OF LIVE ANIMALS

FVE POSITION PAPER

Introduction

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The completion of the European Union internal market together with a change in the patterns of production, processing, sale and consumption of agricultural products has resulted in the expansion of trading between EU Member States, and in particular, in the trade of live animals. Enlargement of the European Union will in all likelihood increase this trade even more.

The transport of live animals has important economic, health and welfare implications. Economic losses during transport are due to mortality, particularly of pigs and poultry, carcass bruising, shrinkage (loss of weight) and reduction in meat quality (DFD or PSE meat, fighting). There is also a loss of public money due to incorrectly granted refunds by the EU.

Transport of live animals can lead to serious animal and public health problems, such as the rapid spread of diseases. One of the reasons given for the rapid spread of Foot and Mouth Disease in the UK was the large scale of animal movements.

The transport of live animals and more particularly the long distance transport of farm animals for slaughter or further fattening raise many animal welfare concerns. The level of care is often inadequate, loading densities, travelling times, feeding and watering intervals are frequently neglected and the means of transport are repeatedly found to be unsuitable.

The protection of animals during transport has always been one of the major areas of concern for FVE. FVE has called on many occasions for the improvement of animal welfare during the transport of live animals and has adopted several resolutions over the years.

FVE has always been of the opinion that fattening of animals should take place within or near the place of birth. Animals should also be slaughtered as near the point of production as possible. The journey time for slaughter animals should never exceed the physiological needs of the animals for food, water or rest.

FVE has also always been of the opinion that the long distance transportation of animals for slaughter should be replaced, as much as possible, by a carcass-only trade. In addition, the transport of animals for breeding purposes can sometimes be replaced by the transport of sperm and embryos.

FVE also reminds the Commission of one of FVE's previous positions, that the export refunds policy for live animals, which are exported from the EU to Third Countries, should be reconsidered. For slaughter animals, such refunds should be abolished. Refunds for breeding animals should only be made after the route plan has been returned and after the competent authority is sure that the animals welfare has been respected and that the animals have arrived at their final destination in good physical condition (subject to confirmation by the veterinarian¹ of the dedicated control or supervisory body).

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¹ See Council Regulation 615/98 Article 3

Why now?

In December 2000, the European Commission published a report to the Council and the European Parliament on the experience acquired by Member States since the implementation of Council Directive 95/29/EC amending Directive 91/628/EEC concerning the protection of animals during transport.

Further to this report, the Commission has announced that it will review the current main legislation. In its proposals, which are expected in the course of 2001, the Commission is likely to address aspects such as the improvement of enforcement in Member States, the development of international harmonisation and co-operation, the improvement of the transport conditions of animals on the bases of new scientific evidence and experience and the adoption of additional measures for the protection of horses being transported for slaughtering.

The Commission has also stated that measures to encourage the slaughter of animals closer to the place where they are raised, merit examination.

Objective

FVE welcomes the initiative of the European Commission and would like to make use of the occasion to put to the European Commission and other interested parties, the pragmatic and coherent viewpoint of veterinarians on the international transport of live animals. FVE wishes to propose constructive amendments to Directive 91/628/EEC, which would increase its effectiveness throughout the EU. This viewpoint is based on the scientific data available and on the practical experience of veterinarians Europe-wide.

FVE focused its attention on transport by road, as this is the means of transport where most of the problems occur. However, FVE recognises that situations giving rise to concerns about animal welfare can also occasionally occur with transport by air, rail and sea.

The amendments proposed should make the Directive as clear as possible, to prevent confusion for the Member States when they have to implement it in their own legislation.

Position

Amendments to the route plan

At present, a route plan is a proposal for a planned journey and does not give a clear view of what will happen to the animals during the journey. The route plan has to be adapted to also report on animal welfare aspects of the journey, such as whether or not the animals are fit to travel, whether the vehicle or container is suitable, whether the space allowances are correct, the results of veterinary checks and to also record if animals become sick, injured or die during the journey. The route plan must also take into account the resting needs of the driver, i.e. if the journey time is longer than the statutory maximum driving period, then two drivers must be provided.

If the route plan is modified as proposed above, it will no longer be just a plan for a route, but it will be a complete run-down (report) on the course of the total journey.

To achieve this, each route plan must have an unique number, so that tracing a route plan is practical. In order to do this, an electronic Europe-wide (internet-based) tracking system is necessary and it should contain the different input fields of the route plan, such as the

unique number of each route plan and the animal welfare parameters. This electronic tracking system must also be able to work two-way, so that a veterinarian carrying out a non-discriminatory check at the destination or during the journey can report back on the condition of the animals to the veterinarian at the place of departure. These reports back must be compulsory and the electronic system should at least send an alert when there are irregularities with the route plan and indicate when the animals have arrived at the place of destination.

FVE recommends that the route plan should consist of three levels. The first level is the part, which needs to be filled in and signed by the veterinarian before the start of the journey. Veterinarians can only approve data, which is within their field of competence, such as the fitness of the animals for travel and whether or not the journey complies with the Directive. Veterinarians must insert the date and time of their examination on this document. The animals should be checked within 24 hours preceding a journey. FVE would prefer the official veterinarian to check the animal at the time of loading, so to be able to check the loading densities on the truck, the exact time and place of loading of the first animal and the fitness for travel when starting the journey. However, FVE recognises that because of a limited number of resources, this is not feasible in all countries at this moment. The veterinarian has to check the animals with regard to the distances and durations of the anticipated stages of the journey, the last feeding time and with regard to follow-up transports.

The second level is the part, which needs to be filled in and signed by the transporter, such as the total number of animals to be taken on the journey, the anticipated time for loading the animals, the information on the drivers of the vehicle and the registration of the vehicle(s) or containers, which the transporter plans to use.

The third level is the part, which needs to be filled in and signed by the drivers or the attendant of the animals and they will have to complete this throughout the journey. This includes information such as the exact number of animals loaded, the exact time of the start of the journey (loading of first animal), resting, milking, watering and feeding details.

When there are multiple pick-ups, multiple route plans have to be made as one route plan is only for a journey from one place of origin to one place of destination by one vehicle.

All route plans must be checked, returned and properly followed up in all EU Member States. Before a two-way system exists, this follow-up should ideally be carried out by the same person, who checked the loading or by another person with the same qualification. Checking route plans must be done in a critical, although consistent and practical manner. The shortest route is not always the best route for the animals (e.g. alpine roads, lots of traffic jams on the road). Nevertheless, planning a route longer than the shortest, as well as a deviation from an approved route, has to be justified, in the first case by the transporter and in the second case by the driver. The average speed should not be higher than 80 km/hour, etc. If some details are not clear to the official inspecting the route plan, further information has to be requested to the transporter or driver.

It must be compulsory for the official veterinarian to check the animals as soon as possible after arrival at their destination and in all cases within 24 hours of unloading.

Registration and licensing

In order to guarantee the suitability of the vehicle, not only should the transporter (consignor) be registered and licensed via a harmonised system but also each of the

transporters' vehicles or containers. These vehicles should be inspected periodically by the competent authority. This data should be collected in a central database, which would allow responsible persons to check a transporter (consignor), a driver and a vehicle or a container throughout a journey.

Animals arriving from Third Countries

Long-distance journeys frequently start in Central and Eastern Europe and animals are at present reaching the border of the Union after having travelled for long periods of time. Enforcement of the Directive in Third Countries proves difficult. Therefore, the FVE considers that animals on long distance journeys arriving from Third Countries should have a compulsory resting period of 24 hours at a staging point near the border. Derogations from the requirement to rest animals for 24 hours on arrival at the external borders of the EU could be considered by the Commission where they were satisfied that the legislation regarding transport of live animals was implemented and respected in both the country of export and any countries of transit, such as when all those are signatories to, and fully implemented the provisions of the convention on the Protection of Animals during Transport.

Member States of transit and destination

Member States must check on a regular non-discriminatory basis whether or not animals are being transported in accordance with the route plan and the Directive's requirements and whether or not the vehicles used for transports exceeding 8 hours meets the additional standards.

When animals have been transported for longer than the permitted journey time, the official veterinarian must have the authority to order and must insist that the animals are taken to a nearby staging point, unloaded and given food, water and a 24 hour rest. Animals unfit to continue travelling after the resting period must be slaughtered, killed or given veterinary treatment.

When vehicles are overloaded in such a way that it is detrimental to the animals welfare, the vehicle must not travel further. The excess animals must be unloaded at the nearest staging point and the transporter must be required to get a second vehicle for these animals.

It is the duty of the responsible officials at any staging points, border inspection post or other inspection post during the journey and at the place of destination to inform the country of origin of any deficiencies regarding animals arriving or passing there, e.g. deficiencies regarding route plans, vehicle standards or the health or welfare of the animals.

Enough staging points must be available in all Member States.

Travelling Times

The total journey time starts with the loading of the first animal and finishes after unloading the last animal at their final destination, thus including the length of the journey, the resting, loading and unloading periods.

The time-period for which animals can travel without too many detrimental effects on their health and welfare depends on many factors such as:

- Meteorological conditions
- Conditions relating to transport vehicle
- Way of driving
- Species and age of animals
- Others

Loading densities, travelling times and ventilation have to be seen in relation to each other.

Chapter VII, point 4, d of the Annex of the Directive says about adult ungulates: “All animals must, after 14 hours of travel, be given a rest period of at least one hour sufficient for them to be given liquid and if necessary fed. After this rest period, they may be transported for a further 14 hours.” FVE points out that a one hour resting period after 14 hours of travel is not sufficient for most ungulates (young and adult) in order to allow the animals to rest, feed and water. Scientific studies show that at least 2 hours and more preferably 4 hours, are needed for animals to rest, feed and water.

Article 11, point 3 of the Directive needs amending so as to require the veterinarian not only to check whether the requirements for feeding and watering are in accordance with the Directive but also to check other animal welfare parameters such as the loading densities and travelling times.

Horses

- Horses shall be transported in individual pens. A mare with a foal must be transported together in a separate department.
- Unbroken horses may be transported in groups, up to five animals per compartment.

Cattle

Following the current Directive, cattle can be transported in vehicles meeting additional requirements for two periods of 14 hours, if given a resting period of 1 hour in between. As already mentioned, a resting period of 1 hour is insufficient. It would also be preferable to have a longer travelling period before the resting period than after the resting period. This would mean that a larger distance could be covered before the resting period and thus making less resting periods necessary overall.

Taking this into account, FVE proposes the following travelling times and resting periods for cattle:

- Calves < 6 months: 12 hours travelling + 4 hour resting period + 8 hours travelling
- Cattle > 6 months: 14 hours travelling + 4 hour resting period + 10 hours travelling

Pigs

Following the current Directive unweaned piglets can be transported in vehicles meeting special requirements for two periods of 9 hours, if given a resting period of 1 hour in between. Pigs may be transported for a maximum period of 24 hours.

FVE proposes the following travelling times and resting periods for pigs:

- Piglets < 30 kg may be transported for a maximum period of 12 hours.
- Pigs > 30 kg may be transported for a maximum period of 21 hours with permanent access to water.

Sheep

- Sheep may be transported for a maximum period of 18 hours. However, if the transporter can prove that the ventilation and the humidity in the vehicle are good, sheep can be transported for a maximum period of 24 hours.

Training and qualification of different categories of personnel involved in animal transport.

Transporters (consignors) have the primary responsibility for only employing drivers who know how to handle, transport and care for animals and who are familiar with the relevant laws and their responsibility for complying with them. In order to get competent drivers, transporters may train them. Transporters (consignors) themselves must be perfectly aware of all the relevant laws and be knowledgeable about how to handle, transport and care for animals, as they have to give the leading example to their drivers.

Competent drivers shall be in possession of a EU-harmonised certificate of competence. The conditions to receive a certificate of competence would however be up to the competent authorities of each Member State.

Loading densities

FVE recognises that loading densities must be revised based on scientific data. Official veterinarians must also be given the power and necessary resources to inspect loading densities on every possible occasion.

Council Regulation (EC) No 411/98 - vehicles used for journeys exceeding eight hours

In vehicles, suitable for journeys exceeding 8 hours, the temperature in each compartment and the humidity must be monitored and the results must be displayed in the driver's cabin. These thermometers must be situated in places that are subject to extreme temperatures, such as behind the drivers cabin. The temperatures recorded whilst animals are on the vehicle must be registered as a retrievable thermographic record. Those records must be presented to official animal transport inspectors and to the responsible persons of the staging point when required.

Vehicles for journeys exceeding 8 hours, which meet the additional standards required, must carry a plate on the outside stating this. This would simplify the task of the official veterinarians and enforcement officers. On this plate, extra information must be given such as how many animals of each species the vehicle may carry without breaching the Directive's provisions on loading densities.

The responsible officials at the place of origin, transfer and destination, can then easily check with the aid of a simple checklist and the central database containing the details on all the vehicles licensed, whether or not a specific vehicle fulfils the additional standards to transport animals for journeys exceeding 8 hours.

“Basic standards” vehicles should never be used for journeys over 8 hours.

Irregularities and Legal actions

The EU Directive must be implemented and enforced in all Member States. Enough resources must be made available to the veterinary services and the FVO to properly monitor the enforcement of the Directive.

When contraventions of the Directive are discovered, legal action must always be considered if the welfare of the animals has been compromised. When reporting on a contravention (to the competent authorities), details must be given on whether or not the welfare of the animals was compromised and whether or not the directive was breached.

When penalties are given, they must be sufficiently severe to discourage transporters breaching the Directive.

If irregularities are observed regarding the certificate of competence or a driver not observing animal welfare regulations, this must be reported back to the authorities responsible for the issuing of the certificate of competence. A financial penalty for both transporter and driver and a confiscation or retraction of the drivers certificate should be considered.

All irregularities and contraventions should be noted in an electronic Europe-wide system, so that any competent person can check this system and give input.

Definition of animals unfit for travel

The veterinarian is the person ultimately responsible to declare an animal fit or unfit for travel by using his/her professional competence. To guide the veterinarian, FVE has drawn up a list of conditions which mean that an animal should not be transported and a list of conditions² which makes an animal unfit for travel in nearly all cases.

Definition of unweaned animal

The reference of age categories or weight is preferred to the reference to weaned or unweaned as the latter is difficult to verify.

Pregnant animals

Pregnant animals shall not be transported in the last 10 % of the gestation period.

² Annex1: Fitness of animals for travel

ANNEX 1

Fitness of animals to travel

Where there is any doubt about the animal's fitness for travel, a veterinary opinion should be sought.

The veterinarian is the person ultimately responsible to declare an animal fit or unfit for travel by using his/her professional competence.

When considering whether animals are fit to be transported, account must be taken of their health and physical fitness in relation to the length of the journey to be undertaken and of the conditions likely to be experienced during the journey (e.g. suitability of the vehicle and the driver) and at the place of destination (e.g. will the slaughterhouse accept the animal). The over-riding consideration should always be to do that which is best for the welfare of the animal.

When a veterinarian has examined the animal and considers it fit to travel for treatment or slaughter, he or she should certify in writing that the animal is fit to travel to the destination without suffering unnecessary pain or suffering.

If an animal is unfit to travel, it should be treated, killed or slaughtered on-farm.

To provide some guidance, FVE has drawn up a list of animals considered unfit for travel and animals considered in nearly all cases to be unfit for transport.

Animals considered unfit for travel:

- Pregnant animals in the last 10 % of the gestation period
- Animals that have given birth during the preceding 48 hours
- Newborn animals in which the navel has not completely healed, e.g. not dried/fallen off, calves < 14 days old. This excludes horses, where a foal can be transported together with the mare in a separate department

Animals considered in nearly all cases unfit for transport:

Animals, which are, because of serious disease or injury, unable to walk unaided onto the vehicle (without e.g. the usage of electric goads or dragging) or which can be expected not to be able to descend the vehicle unaided such as:

- Downers (alert cows which are unable to rise to a standing position but will eat and drink)
- Animals, which experience severe pain when moving e.g. animals with broken extremities or a broken pelvis
- Animals with large, deep wounds
- Animals with severe haemorrhages
- Animals with severe system disorders
- Animals which are only able to stand after being forced (e.g. very weak, fatigued or emaciated animals)
- Animals, which are lame in such a degree that they can put no or hardly any weight on one of their legs e.g. acute inflammation of joints, paralysis, ...
- Animals with an uterine prolapse
- Animals, which have just been dehorned

- Animals with visible cardiovascular or respiratory disorders, e.g. pigs with red skin areas, forced inhalation, respiratory distress, gasping for air, ...

Most cases unfit for travel:

- Animals with severe inflammations, such as mastitis, pneumonia, gastro-intestinal
- Animals, which have (generalised) incoordination (e.g. animals which have difficulties keeping their balance, animals which have been given sedative drugs)
- Animals, which have an obviously disturbed reaction to their environment (e.g.. extreme agitation, disorder of nervous system, intoxications)
- Animals with an non-complicated early rectal prolapse can be transported but must be done in a separate compartment
- Animals with torn off horns
- Blind animals

ANNEX 2

Summary of main recommendations

- Fattening of animals should take place within or near the place of birth. Animals should be slaughtered as near the point of production as possible.
- Long distance transportation of animals for slaughter should be replaced, as much as possible, by a carcass-only trade.
- FVE requests the Commission to reconsider the export refunds policy for live animals. Refunds for breeding animals should only be made after the route plan has been returned and after the competent authority is sure that the animals welfare has been respected and that the animals have arrived at their final destination in good physical condition.
- Route plans should be adapted to also report on animal welfare aspects of the journey.
- Each route plan should have a unique number, so that the tracking of a route plan is practical.
- FVE recommends that the route plan should consist of three levels. The first level is the part, which needs to be filled in and signed by the veterinarian. Veterinarians need to check issues, such as the fitness of the animals for travel and whether or not the journey complies with the Directive. The second level is the part, which needs to be filled in and signed by the transporter, such as the total number of animals to be taken on the journey, the information on the drivers of the vehicle and the registration of the vehicle(s) or containers, which the transporter plans to use. The third level is the part for the drivers or the attendant of the animals and they will have to complete this throughout the journey.
- Route plans must also take into account the resting needs of the driver, i.e. if the journey time is longer than the statutory maximum driving period, then two drivers must be provided.
- All route plans must be checked, returned and properly followed up in all EU Member States.
- All data from the route plans have to be put in an electronic Europe-wide (internet-based) tracking system, which can easily be used for input and consultation by all competent persons. This electronic tracking system must also be able to work two-way, so that a veterinarian carrying out a non-discriminatory check during the journey or at the destination can report on items such as the condition of the animals to the veterinarian at the place of departure.
- Not only the transporters should be registered and licensed but also each of the transporters' vehicles or containers and all this data must be collected in a central database.
- Animals arriving from Third Countries should have a compulsory resting period of 24 hours at a staging point near the border. Derogation from this would be allowed only if the Commission were satisfied that the legislation regarding the transport of live animals was implemented and respected in both the country of origin and the countries of transit.

- Member States must check on a regular non-discriminatory basis whether or not animals are being transported in accordance with the route plan and the Directive's requirements and whether or not the vehicles used for transports exceeding 8 hours meets the additional standards.
- It is the duty of the responsible officials during the journey and at the place of destination to inform the country of origin of any deficiencies regarding animals arriving or passing there, e.g. deficiencies regarding route plans, vehicle standards or the health or welfare of the animals.
- The total journey time starts with the loading of the first animal and finishes after unloading the last animal at their final destination, thus including the length of the journey, the resting, loading and unloading periods.
- Article 11, point 3 (veterinarian checking at BIP) and Chapter VII, point 4, d of the Annex of the Directive (1 hour resting period after 14 hours of travel) needs to be amended.
- Transporters (consignors) have the primary responsibility for only employing drivers who know how to handle, transport and care for animals and who are familiar with the relevant laws and their responsibility for complying with them. In order to get competent drivers, transporters may train them.
- Loading densities must be revised based on scientific data.
- In vehicles, suitable for journeys exceeding 8 hours, the temperature in each compartment and the humidity must be monitored and recorded, and the results must be displayed in the driver's cabin.
- Vehicles for journeys exceeding 8 hours, which meet the additional standards required, must carry a plate on the outside stating this. This would simplify the task of the official veterinarians and enforcement officers.
- The EU Directive must be implemented and enforced in all Member States. Enough resources must be made available to the veterinary services and the FVO to properly monitor the enforcement of the Directive.
- When contraventions of the Directive are discovered, legal action should always be considered if the welfare of the animals has been compromised.
- The veterinarian has to use his/her professional competence to ultimately decide whether an animal is fit to travel.
- Pregnant animals shall not be transported in the last 10 % of the gestation period.