

May 2002

**ANIMAL TRANSPORT - NEW REPORT BY EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S  
SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE**

**SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS AND COMMENTS BY  
COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING**

In March 2002, the European Commission's Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare (SCAHAW) published a detailed report on the welfare of animals during transport.

Disappointingly, the report is not as strong as the European Parliament's November 2001 report; the Parliament recommended that a maximum limit of 8 hours or 500 km. should be placed on journeys to slaughter or for further fattening. Nonetheless, the SCAHAW report makes a number of recommendations which, if adopted, would lead to much stronger regulations on animal transport than those currently in place.

Particularly helpful are the following SCAHAW recommendations:

- The SCAHAW report recommends shorter travelling times and longer rest periods than those required by the existing Directive.
- The SCAHAW recommends that a maximum overall limit of 8 hours should be placed on the transport to slaughter of pigs, horses, calves (up to 6 months of age) and lambs of 20 kg. or less. The report also recommends that a maximum overall limit of 12 hours should be placed on the transport of cattle and sheep to slaughter.

- The SCAHAW report also recommends that if the individual animals cannot be inspected, transport should be limited to 8 hours. They stress that inspection necessitates adequate access to each individual and that adequate inspection is not possible when animals can be obscured behind other animals; at present the severe overcrowding which is commonplace means that most animals in a vehicle are obscured by other animals.
- The SCAHAW recommends that animals sent on long journeys should be given much better space allowances than those sent on shorter journeys.
- The SCAHAW recommends that drivers of livestock vehicles and/or others handling animals or responsible for them during transport must receive proper training and hold a certificate stating this.
- The SCAHAW report recommends that the use of markets for selling slaughter animals should be discouraged.

### **Disease**

The SCAHAW report stresses that some pathogens that do not lead to disease in farm animals kept under good conditions become activated during transport, often because of some degree of immunosuppression resulting from stress during transport.

The report adds that transported animals may also become infected with pathogens that come from other animals with whom they are mixed during transport. Moreover, disease may also be transmitted to non-transported animals because of transport; important diseases which might be transmitted in this way include foot-and-mouth disease and classical swine fever.

### **Overall conclusion**

The report concludes that the welfare of animals unaccustomed to loading and transport is significantly poorer than normal during the first few hours after loading. There is then some degree of adaptation, but after a few hours of transport welfare tends to become poorer as journey length increases. The report stresses that **“Hence such animals should not be transported if this can be avoided and journeys should be as short as possible”**.

### **Markets**

The report concludes that the practice of sending animals through markets on their way to slaughter should be discouraged because, firstly, they undergo considerably longer durations of journey from farm to slaughterhouse than those which go direct from farm to a slaughterhouse, and secondly, infectious agents can be spread at markets.

### **Inspections**

The report stresses that all animals should be inspected by the person responsible for them shortly before the start of the journey in order to ascertain whether they are fit to travel. The animals should again be inspected to ascertain whether they continue to be fit for transport no later than 8 hours after the start of the journey. Crucially, **SCAHAW recommends that if the individual animals cannot be inspected, travel should be limited to 8 hours (emphasis added). They stress that inspection necessitates adequate access to each individual** and the possibility to take appropriate remedial action. The report stresses that adequate inspection is not possible in the following circumstances, and that accordingly in these circumstances journeys longer than 8 hours should not be permitted:

- The ceiling height is lower than 1.4 m.
- Animals can be obscured behind other animals.
- Animals are being transported in crates.

### **Journey times, feeding, watering and rest**

As indicated earlier, the report's overall recommendation is that animals should not be transported if this can be avoided and that journeys should be as short as possible. That said, the report sets out differing times for two different categories of animals:

#### **Horses, pigs, calves (up to 6 months of age) and lambs of 20 kg. or less:**

A maximum of 8 hours after a journey commences, these animals should have a rest period of at least 6 hours, during which time they have food and water available on the vehicle which all individuals can eat and drink. After 6 hours rest, the animals can be transported for another 8 hours after which they must be given a rest period of at least 24 hours during which time they have food and water available on the vehicle which all individuals can eat and drink.

#### **Cattle and sheep:**

A maximum of 12 hours after a journey commences cattle and sheep must have a rest period of 6 hours during which they are provided with, on the vehicle, food and water which all individuals can eat and drink. After the 6 hours rest, cattle and

sheep can be transported for a further 12 hours after which they must be given a rest period of at least 24 hours during which time they must have food and water available on the vehicle which all individuals can eat and drink.

The following table sets out the maximum journey segments (in hours) recommended by SCAHAW:

| Species                     | 1st Travel period | 1st Rest | 2nd Travel period | 2nd Rest |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| Horses, pigs, calves, lambs | 8                 | 6        | 8                 | 24       |
| Sheep, cattle               | 12                | 6        | 12                | 24       |

Continue 3rd and 4th travel periods etc. as 1st and 2nd.

The SCAHAW report makes 2 vital points as regards journey times:

- When the length of the journey is such that animals must be given food, water and rest on the vehicle, the animals must be given much greater space allowances than for shorter journeys. This is to enable them to walk around within the vehicle in order to obtain food or water whilst others may be lying down.
- It would be better for slaughter animals to avoid journeys longer than those after which the animals must be provided with food and water on the vehicle, i.e. slaughter pigs, horses, calves (up to 6 months of age) and lambs of 20 kg. or less should not be transported for more than 8 hours, whereas slaughter cattle and sheep should not be transported for more than 12 hours. The reasons SCAHAW gives for recommending a limit to slaughter journeys are that “with increasing duration of journey, the welfare of animals generally gets worse because they become more fatigued, incur a steadily increasing energy deficit, become more susceptible to existing infections, and may become diseased because they encounter new pathogens”.

### **Space allowances**

The report recommends differing space allowances that vary according to the species and the length of the journey. The space allowances are based on the principle that the space provided for each animal which prefers to stand during transport should be such that it can adopt a position maintaining balance without any contact with other animals or with the vehicle or partition walls and without a high risk of falling.

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.

SCAHAW points out that where vehicle movement, caused by swerving around corners and sudden braking and accelerating, is not too great, pigs of all ages will lie down throughout the time the vehicle is moving. They point out that this is probably due in part to the fact that many pigs have some degree of leg disorder or are relatively heavy for their leg strength.

Sheep travelling on journeys with little lateral movement or sudden acceleration will often remain standing for several hours but begin to lie down after 4 hours. However, when journeys are rough, sheep will continue to stand.

Cattle may remain standing during transport of up to 20 hours duration, even if the vehicle is driven carefully. However, where much bedding is used and journeys are on motorways, many cattle lie down after a few hours. Horses almost always stand during transport, even on smooth journeys. They may stand or lie down when resting.

### **Compartment heights**

Sufficient height is important:

- in that an animal which is standing needs to adopt a comfortable posture unimpeded,
- for adequate temperature regulation and removal of noxious gases, the height of the compartment must be adequate for effective ventilation to occur.

The SCAHAW report recommends that the height of the compartment for pigs and sheep should be 15 cm. above the highest point on the animal in vehicles with efficient forced draft ventilation and 30 cm. above the highest point on the animal in vehicles with natural ventilation. For cattle, the compartment height should be at least 20 cm. above the top of the head of each animal when it is standing in a comfortable position.

### **Roll-on, roll-off sea transport**

The report concludes that at wind speeds of Force 6 or above, motion sickness, noise at a very aversive level, abortion and injury may occur. Accordingly, SCAHAW recommends that sea crossings on roll-on, roll-off ferries should not be permitted if there is a likelihood of winds of Force 5 or above, or if sea conditions are those produced by such winds.

### **Training**

The report recommends that drivers of livestock vehicles and/or others handling animals or responsible for them during transport must receive proper training and hold a certificate stating this. The report stresses that this training should emphasise that when vehicles carrying livestock go around corners or bends, the animals are considerably more vulnerable to the effects of vehicle movement than are human passengers. Hence slow speeds and careful driving are important. The necessity for avoiding sudden braking and acceleration should be emphasised.

The recommendation as to training is very welcome. However, Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) believes that once someone has successfully completed training, s/he must receive a licence, which can be suspended or withdrawn if that person breaches the law or otherwise ill-treats an animal during transport.

### **Payment**

The report recommends that persons who are responsible for checking, loading, driving or unloading livestock should not be allowed to be paid according to the speed at which they carry out these tasks and they should not be paid for exceeding the permitted number of animals carried on the vehicle.

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