

Long-distance Live Transport: Common problems and practical solutions

Over the last several years, investigations into long-distance live transport have identified ten frequently recurring – yet preventable - problems with very serious impacts on animal welfare:

1. Journey logs incomplete and with an unrealistically short estimated journey time
2. Failure to provide animals with adequate food, water and 24 hours rest at an approved control post
3. An inadequate water supply
4. Inadequate bedding
5. Overcrowding
6. Insufficient headroom
7. High temperature and inadequate ventilation in the vehicle
8. Transport of unfit animals
9. Unweaned lambs and calves
10. Inadequate partitions in the vehicle

1

Journey logs incomplete and with unrealistically short estimated journey time

Important parts of the journey log are often left blank. Also journey logs sometimes give unrealistically short journey times; as a result the stops at an approved control post for 24 hours rest, water and food that are obligatory for long journeys are neither planned nor carried out.

Increased journey times typically result in lower welfare standards, and so journeys should aim to be as short as possible.¹ All necessary arrangements should be made in advance to minimise the length of the journey and to meet the animals' needs during the journey, such as rest breaks and feeding.²

Required Action

Transporters should:

- complete all relevant sections of the journey log
- provide a realistic estimated journey time in Section 1 of the journey log. The length (kilometres) of the journey can be checked on a computer programme. However, transporters cannot rely on such programmes to tell them how long the journey will take as they are based on the travelling speed of cars. Transporters must estimate the journey time taking into account the speed at which a livestock truck can reasonably travel and allowing for heavy traffic, roadworks and unexpected delays. Regulation 1/2005 requires the journey time to be calculated from the loading of the first animal to the unloading of the last animal.

2

Failure to provide animals with adequate food, water and 24 hours rest at an approved control post

Regulation 1/2005 requires that after 28 hours transport of cattle and sheep, 24 hours transport of pigs and horses and 18 hours transport of unweaned animals, the animals must be unloaded for 24 hours rest, feed and water at an approved control post. Often this rest break is not given at all or it is significantly shorter than the required 24 hours. The animals suffer significantly as a direct result through hunger, thirst and exhaustion.

We have seen occasions where the control post named in the journey log was in fact closed or had insufficient capacity so that the required rest stop was unable to take place.

Required Action

- The organiser of the journey must ensure that drivers have adequate funds to cover feed or other requirements for the animals, especially taking delays to the journey into account.
- Those responsible for the animals must also ensure that any control post stops included on the journey log are open and functioning, have capacity for the animals and that they have written confirmation of their reservation at the control post.



This bull was so hungry he was trying to eat faeces



Bull desperate for food trying to eat filthy bedding.

Photo © Eyes on Animals & Animal Welfare Foundation

3

Inadequate water supply

Regulation 1/2005 provides that in the case of journeys over 8 hours animals must have access to water on board the truck.³ However, animals are frequently unable to access water on long journeys due to faulty drinking devices, empty water tanks, filthy water troughs or inaccessibility of drinking devices. In combination with long journeys, often in high temperatures and with overcrowding, the lack of water can cause animals to suffer from dehydration which is potentially life-threatening.

Animals are often unable to access the drinking devices. This may be because the drinking devices are on one side only of the vehicle, so many of the animals are unable to reach them particularly if the truck is overcrowded or because there are an insufficient number of watering devices. Sometimes the water tanks are empty or the drinking devices are switched off, filthy with faeces, or are defective and fail to function.

In some cases the water devices are not appropriate for the species being transported. Sometimes the nipples are too high for lambs to reach, and adult cattle cannot place their mouth around them nor press the nipple properly to get enough water for their needs.

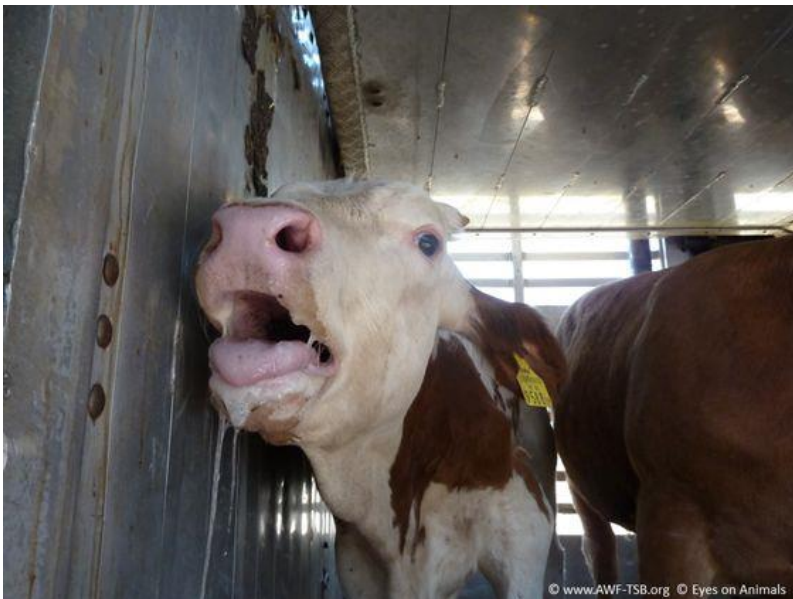
Required Action

- Journeys over 8 hours should have a continuous water supply.
- Before the journey begins, transporters should check that there are a sufficient number of accessible drinking devices that are functioning properly and that the water tank is full.
- The drinking devices should also be designed and positioned in a way that is appropriate to the species and age of the animal. Water troughs must be clean.



Thirsty bull trying to get water.

Photo © Eyes on Animals & Animal Welfare Foundation



Calf suffering with dehydration, having been transported for days without any access to water.

Photo www.AWF-TSB.org © Eyes on Animals

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Inadequate Bedding

Bedding material is too often either not provided or not replaced during long journeys. This results in filthy travelling conditions which can cause discomfort and sometimes injury from slipping and trampling. Therefore, bedding should be provided and replaced during longer journeys if it becomes dirty or insufficient in quantity.

Regulation 1/2005 provides that on journeys over 8 hours animals must be provided with appropriate material for bedding to guarantee comfort appropriate to the species, number of animals being transported, journey time and the weather.⁴ The bedding must also ensure the adequate absorption of urine and faeces.



Filthy and inadequate bedding.

Photo © Eyes on Animals & Animal Welfare Foundation

However, it is common for no bedding to be provided, which results in a wet, filthy floor. If bedding is provided, then frequently the bedding is not replaced on longer journeys and so becomes filthy as the journey progresses.

A lack of adequate bedding causes discomfort as the animals are forced to stand on a hard surface for many hours or even days.

The stress of the journey and unsanitary conditions from excess urine and faeces promote the transmission of disease.

Wet floors can cause animals to slip and fall and may result in trampling by other animals.

Required action:

- Transporters must ensure that on journeys over 8 hours there is adequate bedding material provided for the number of animals being transported.
- They must also be prepared with materials or funds to replace the bedding on long journeys.

5

Overcrowding

Overcrowding of animals in transport is very common and can lead to a great deal of suffering. Overcrowding increases the likelihood of trampling, prevents animals from lying down and increases the likelihood of heat stress, injury and mortality. The transporter must comply with the minimum space requirements set out in Chapter VII of Annex I to Regulation 1/2005 and ensure a lower stocking density in high temperatures.

Chapter VII provides that stocking densities may need to “vary depending on the breed, the size, the physical condition and the length of fleece of the animals, as well as on the meteorological conditions and the journey time”.



Photo © Eyes on Animals & Animal Welfare Foundation



Photo © Animals' Angels

Required action

- The space allowances set out in Chapter VII of Annex I to Regulation 1/2005 are minimum requirements. Conditions such as high temperatures may require increasing the space per animal.
- The transporter must also ensure that there is sufficient space for animals to reach watering devices and to be inspected.

Overcrowding is particularly harmful when combined with high summer temperatures, a lack of water and inadequate ventilation. This can lead to extreme exhaustion, heat stress, injuries and in severe cases to mortality.

6

Insufficient headroom

Animals need sufficient headroom to ensure adequate ventilation and to enable them to stand comfortably in their natural position. Ignoring this requirement causes significant discomfort for the animals as well as impeding air circulation. This is a particular problem in hot weather. Care should be taken to ensure there is adequate space above the animals.

Regulation 1/2005 requires sufficient space to be provided inside the animals' compartment to ensure adequate ventilation when the animals are standing in their natural position without hindering their natural movement.⁵

Many compartments have ceilings that are so low that animals touch them with their heads and/or backs when standing naturally. The lack of headroom is uncomfortable for the animals and can lead to them having to stand in a stooped position, sometimes for several days.



Photos © Eyes on Animals & Animal Welfare Foundation

The space above the highest point of sheep and pigs should be 15cm for vehicles with a good ventilation system and at least 30cm for vehicles without forced ventilation.⁶ The space above the highest point of cattle should be at least 20cm.

The highest point of the animal is the top of the head when it is held up in a comfortable position, and this includes horns for cattle. None of the animals should be able to touch the ceiling with its head. Moreover, loading sheep onto four decks almost always results in insufficient headroom. There should only be three decks for sheep unless they are very young lambs.

Required action

- Transporters must ensure that there is sufficient headroom for animals to stand in a natural position and for there to be adequate ventilation above them.

7

High temperature and insufficient ventilation in the vehicle

High temperature can cause heat exhaustion and significant suffering for the animals being transported. Regulation 1/2005 provides that for journeys over 8 hours ventilation systems in the vehicles must be designed to maintain an internal temperature between 5 and 30°C at all times, with a +/- 5°C tolerance depending on the outside temperature.

However, the transport must aim for 30°C or less. In a letter dated 28 June 2016 to Chief Veterinary Officers, the European Commission has said that **“In practice, there is no possibility to lower the internal temperatures on vehicles travelling in ambient temperature conditions over 30°C.”**

Required action

- If the temperature in the vehicle is over 30°C or is likely to be so during the journey, the transport should not take place.
- The 5°C tolerance is only for an unexpected spike in temperature through unexpected weather events.

8

Transport of unfit animals

Animals that are injured, ill or heavily pregnant are unfit to travel. Yet we repeatedly see unfit animals transported and suffering significantly as a result. Transporters must ensure that animals unfit to travel are excluded from transport and are given immediate attention.

However, injured or ill animals are frequently transported. Dairy cows that cannot walk have ropes or chains attached to a leg or their neck and are dragged off the truck and into the abattoir. Tractors are also used to shove the unfit animals on to the truck or across the slaughterhouse yard.

Required action:

- Care must be taken to ensure that animals that are ill or injured are not transported, and are fed and rested. Moreover, injured animals should be carefully handled so as to not cause pain or suffering.
- Paragraph 4 of Chapter I of Annex I to Regulation 1/2005 provides that when animals fall ill or are injured during transport, they shall be separated from the others and receive first-aid treatment as soon as possible. They must be given appropriate veterinary treatment and if necessary undergo emergency slaughter or killing in a way which does not cause them any unnecessary suffering.



This heavily pregnant cow was exported from Germany to Turkey. She underwent an emergency caesarean at the EU border, the calf died and the cow was then slaughtered without proper equipment. Photo © Eyes on Animals/AWF



This cow could not walk: a tractor was used to shove her across the yard.

9

Unweaned calves and lambs

The transport of unweaned calves and lambs poses particular problems as cold water is an inappropriate liquid for their digestive system. Unweaned animals should be given electrolytes or milk substitutes during rests.

Unweaned calves require more attention than other animals as they should not consume cold water. They instead require electrolytes or milk replacer. However, milk replacer cannot realistically be offered on board the vehicle.

The Commission recommends that:

- calves could be considered as unweaned under the age of two months and lambs under the age of six weeks.⁷
- Before or during the transport, the competent authority should systematically investigate which arrangements have been made to ensure that animals are offered electrolytes or milk substitutes during the resting period.
- Metal nipples or troughs alone should not be considered as being adapted for drinking by unweaned animals.
- The transport of unweaned animals over long journeys should not be authorised if the outside temperature during the journey is likely to be less than 0°C.

Required action

- Calves should be unloaded at a control post and given warm electrolytes or milk replacer during a rest period of at least one hour after 9 hours of transport. They should also be given warm electrolytes or milk replacer during the 24 hour rest period at an approved control post that is required after 18 hours transport.
- Alternatively, unweaned calves and lambs should not be transported for longer than 8 hours.

10

Inadequate partitions in the vehicle

Partitions are necessary to stop animals from being thrown around in a moving vehicle. However, partitions are frequently not provided, or if provided often have large gaps which can trap animals' limbs and cause significant pain and injuries. Partitions should be provided and properly positioned so as to not cause injuries.

Paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 of Chapter VI of Annex I to Regulation 1/2005 provide that in the case of journeys over 8 hours partitions must be fitted so that separate compartments may be created.

Partitions should allow free access to water. Partitions should also be adjustable so that the size of the compartment can be adapted to specific requirements such as the species, size and number of animals.

Required action

- Partitions must be fitted.
- There must be no gaps between the bottom of the partition and the vehicle's floor or between the side of the partition and the vehicle's wall as animals or their limbs can be trapped in such gaps.



Gap between bottom of partition & floor – can result in legs getting stuck & injured.

Photos © Eyes on Animals/AWF



In this case, the sheep has become trapped between different floors of the vehicle.

Conclusion

The welfare of animals welfare deteriorates the longer a journey goes on. However, if the requirements of Regulation 1/2005 are adhered to, staff are trained, journeys are properly planned and contingencies taken into account, much avoidable animal suffering could be reduced or prevented.

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¹ 2004 Report by the Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare of European Food Safety Authority

² Article 3(a) of Regulation 1/2005

³ Chapter III of Annex I to Regulation 1/2005

⁴ Paragraph 1.2 of Chapter VI of Annex I to Regulation 1/2005

⁵ Paragraph 1.2 of Chapter II of Annex 1 to Regulation 1/2005

⁶ Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare (SCAHAW) report on the welfare of animals during transport (adopted on 11.03.2002)

⁷ SANCO D5 Dsdj D (2009) 450351.