



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Directorate C - Scientific Opinions

C2 - Management of scientific committees; scientific co-operation and networks

The welfare of animals during transport
(details for horses, pigs, sheep and cattle)

Report of the
Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare
Adopted on 11 March 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The welfare of animals, including their health can be substantially affected in the course of and as a result of transport. There is now much scientific information about welfare in relation to transport and many studies have been conducted since the E.U. Scientific Veterinary Committee Report in 1992. This is the first part of a report on the welfare of animals during transport and concerns general issues (Chapters 1-5) and specific information on horses, pigs, sheep and cattle (Chapters 6-10). A second part of the report will follow.

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. When animals are to be transported, they should be: prepared for the experiences associated with the journey, loaded carefully, kept at a stocking density and with a roof height which meet their needs for normal movements and resting positions, driven in such a way that they can maintain their balance at all times, fed, watered and rested according to their needs, and unloaded carefully. The person responsible for the animals should be properly trained, should have a route plan with information about whom to contact in emergency in all points of the journey, and should inspect the animals before the journey and at intervals adequate to detect problems. Details of these requirements are given in this report and may differ according to species.

Poor welfare in transported animals is caused by the stressful conditions which they encounter during loading and transport and also by disease which is exacerbated during transport or transmitted during and as a result of transport. Classical swine fever and foot and mouth disease are recent examples of diseases transmitted when animals were transported. Such diseases are important animal welfare problems, as well as economic problems. Hence: contact between transported animals and other farm animals should be minimised, quarantine periods on farms are advisable after transport, the use of markets for slaughter animals should be discouraged, and animals should not be unloaded from vehicles at staging points. As a consequence of this last recommendation, on longer journeys where a rest period is needed, animals should have space for resting, feeding and watering.

Some of the poorest welfare in transported animals is caused by bad treatment of animals during loading or unloading, by bad driving, or by lack of proper inspection. In order to minimise such problems: persons responsible for animals should be trained and hold a certificate stating this, such persons should be paid in a way that encourages good practice, and it should not be possible to insure against the results of practices which result in poor welfare.

Since pigs and adult male cattle may fight if mixed, resulting in poor welfare and carcass damage, such animals should not be mixed with individuals that have previously lived in different pens. Vehicles should have moveable pen dividers. Because of the dangers of group transport for horses, they should be transported in individual stalls. Animals should not be tied when in moving vehicles.

Many animals are forced to move up or down ramps which are too steep during loading and unloading. Systems which eliminate the need for ramps or purpose-

built ramps no steeper than 10° are desirable. No animal should be required to negotiate a ramp steeper than 20°.

Equations for calculating the floor area to be provided on vehicles are presented in the report. The recommended space allowances for sheep during journeys of up to 4 hours and for cattle on journeys of up to 12 hours are sufficient for the animals to stand maintaining balance without any contact with other animals or the vehicle walls. The recommended space allowances for pigs on journeys of up to 8 hours and for sheep of 4-12 hours take account of the need for these animals to lie down in a comfortable lying position without risk of being walked on by other animals. The recommended space allowances for journeys of more than 8 hours for pigs and more than 12 hours for sheep and cattle are sufficient for the animals to rest in a comfortable position and for all to move around to feed and drink. The ceiling heights recommended allow comfortable standing and adequate ventilation. As a consequence, horses of average size cannot be transported in multi-deck vehicles and adult sows and boars cannot be transported in three deck vehicles.

It is important that there should be careful driving of animal transport vehicles so that there is less lateral acceleration during cornering and less sudden braking than is normally accepted by human passengers.

Since inspection of animals requires that every individual can be properly checked and this is not possible in some cases, for example where animals are in crates or where deck ceilings are 1.4 m or lower, in these cases the journey duration should not be longer than the eight hours after which inspection should be carried out. Food and water should be provided 8 hours after a journey commences for horses, pigs, calves and lambs and twelve hours after a journey commences for older sheep and cattle. The period of provision of food and water also allows rest and should last for 6 hours. After this a further 8 or 12 hour journey can occur before a 24 hour rest is needed. Pigs should be offered water at every driver's break when the temperature is 20C or above and ad libitum hay should be provided for horses during transport.

Where vehicles are carried on roll-on roll-off ferries, forced ventilation systems are required if the vehicles will be below decks. Sea crossings should not be permitted if winds of force 5 or above are likely or if sea conditions are those produced by such winds.