

# Meeting of the sub-group on transport

## Transport of unweaned and other vulnerable animals

Fifth meeting, 30 August 10:00-12:30  
(Videoconference on Teams)

### - MINUTES -

#### Attendance

<b>Independent expert</b>	Michael Marahrens
<b>Civil society organisations</b>	Animal Welfare Foundation Animals' Angels
<b>Business and professional organisations</b>	FEFASS UECBV Copa
<b>Member States</b>	The Netherlands Czech Republic
<b>European Commission</b>	DG SANTE G5 DG SANTE F2
<b>Guest(s)</b>	Millieu/Ecorys Consortium

#### Discussion

##### 1. Welcome and short introduction on the topic

The Commission briefly introduced the topic of the meeting as well as the event the European Food Safety Authority is planning for the 26 September to present the main outcomes of their scientific opinions on animal transport.

##### 2. Transport of unweaned and other vulnerable animals: main challenges

Members stressed the need to address different categories of animals: unweaned, pregnant, end of career animals and other as these do not have the same needs.

The following remarks were made on unweaned animals:

- Germany will raise as from 2023 the age of transport for calves to 28 days.
- New vehicles have been designed to provide calves with warmed-up electrolyte solution to unweaned calves. The calves were supplied with an electrolyte solution. This is not a supply according to their needs. Furthermore, it is not possible for drivers to ensure that all calves receive electrolyte solutions. In order to be sure that all animals have access to the drinkers, densities on the truck should be lower. Other members pointed out that feeding/drinking calves on board is not broadly accepted as the best solution.

- Assembly centre hopping is an issue. While at the centre, some of the unweaned calves do not get milk replacement, only electrolytes. The calves can be transported up to 3 days without being properly feed with milk / milk replacment
- “Feeding” and “drinking” should be better defined in a harmonised way.
- Organisers should better identify and indicate the category of animals.
- Drinking and feeding of unweaned calves is often problematic in particular during transport by Ro-Ro.
- The journey times for transport of unweaned calves are often exceeded
- Attention should be paid to the effects of changing the supply chain: new environmental permissions, permissions to build new stables/facilities, the increased costs of keeping these animals on farm for a longer period. In this regard, some members recommended that the Commission ask Member States to provide for flexibility for environmental permits for changes that only impact total production with less than 1 pct.
- Better implementation and enforcement of current rules are necessary
- Seasonal calving does not happen in all Member States: different solutions could be considered in terms of extra housing.
- Members remarked the importance of addressing other species: lambs and unweaned lambs, as these are more vulnerable given their lower value and their small size; kid goats; fish...
- Poultry should also be considered vulnerable when travelling in containers; the mortality rates may look small in percent, but in reality these are considerable in number. Their thermoregulation is at stake, their density needs to be reconsidered as well as the mortality rates that trigger further investigation. The vulnerability of spent hens was also stressed.
- The approval of vehicles for unweaned animals is also sensitive: some Member States do not approve them since animals cannot be fed on board
- The vehicle approval certificate should indicate also the category of animals and not only species.
- The symptoms of unfitness for transport also need to be redefined and better classified between serious and light symptoms

With regards to pregnant animals:

- Insemination certificates should be used in the future as tool to control and prevent the transport of heavily pregnant animals by determining the stage of the pregnancy
- EFSA’s opinion on pregnant animals was not conclusive on whether the foetus feels pain or not
- There should be stricter rules on temperatures and more bedding provided

The Commission highlighted the following findings during the 3 audits carried out this year on the transport of unweaned calves:

- > Assembly centres are indeed an issue both on origin and at destination
- > Drinking and feeding have to be better defined
- > Transporters generally agree that lower density is better for calves
- > Drinkers in lorries are installed but it is difficult to ensure these are properly used
- > Different kinds of businesses call for different ages of calves
- > Mortalities rates are, in any case, very low.

### **3. Limiting journey times**

On limiting journey times of vulnerable animals as a way to address the challenges of their transport:

- A member indicated that limiting journey times is crucial to improving the welfare of vulnerable animals: changing only other factors (i.e. min. age and/or vehicles conditions) is not enough. A redefinition of the journey and resting times is needed.
- There is a need to distinguish between transport of pregnant animals for slaughter and for further breeding.
- Some members indicated that there are other solutions that need to be further explored to improve their welfare during transport rather than limiting the journey times. These could be addressed case by case depending on the needs of the different Member States/operators. It is not always possible to keep the animals/slaughter animals on farm.

- Others supported to limit the transport of unweaned animals to 8 hours since these animals cannot be fed on board.
- Stops at control posts should be reconsidered: it is not always possible to unload the animals to feed them or there would be biosecurity risks. Council Regulation (EC) 1255/97 establishes a minimum period of 24h of permanence in the control post before travelling further.
- For pregnant animals, an absolute limit of 4 hours and max 40% of pregnancy was suggested

**4. What higher technical requirements for trucks or vessels could ensure and/or improve the welfare of vulnerable animals?**

Members mentioned the following further requirements:

- Temperature sensors and their regular calibration. Data should be trustworthy if sanctions are to be imposed on the basis of the data. The calibration of the temperature sensors is not that complicated as those for measuring the humidity. ISPRA did a good work and published a report on this issue.
- Water systems available to all animals, regardless their vulnerability. Drinkers should be accessible to all animals and warning systems to alert the driver of an empty water tank should be installed. Research demonstrated that having additional drinker on each deck increases the water consumption which proves that it is useful.
- Weather protection in all trucks
- Type 3 category of vehicles could be considered in the future for unweaned and vulnerable animals requesting for better conditions and monitoring
- Some members stressed that limiting journey times would make these technical requirements not necessary