

Study on shifting from transport of unweaned dairy calves over long distance to local rearing and fattening

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Objectives

- Analysis of the problems linked with the transport of unweaned non-replacements dairy calves over long journeys in the EU,
- Explores existing initiatives and good practices to address such problems.
- To achieve these objectives 3 themes were identified:
 1. State of play of the transport of unweaned non-replacement dairy calves over long journeys.
 2. Identification and analysis of existing alternatives
 3. Assessment of alternatives and identification of best practices



Theme 1 the transport of unweaned non-replacement dairy calves over long journeys

- To describe the key economic players involved in the long-journey (> 8 hours) cross-border transport of unweaned calves in the EU.
- To map and analyse the data related to the long duration (> 8 hours) transport of unweaned calves within the EU, and their market value



30-50%
Replacement



7.2 million
bulls and
bullocks



22.6 million dairy cows



4.2 million
veal calves

Long distance transport of unweaned calves

- Annually born: 20 million calves
 - Intra EU trade: 1,4 million
 - Longer than 8 hours journey: 580 000 animals

Average annual number of unweaned calves on consignments of 8 hours or less and of more than 8 hours entering the Member States in the EU from 2015 to 2020

MS Origin		MS Destination	
France	115 000	Spain	292 000
Ireland	114 000	Netherlands	134 000
Germany	75 000	Belgium	45 000
Czech Republic	60 000	Italy	56 000



Although in absolute numbers perhaps limited, a substantial proportion of unweaned calves born in Estonia (34 400 animals/year, 42.1%), Czech Republic (60 000 animals/year, 25.1%) and Latvia (3 200 animals/year 26.4%), were moved to other MS on long journeys

Legislation on long-journeys

- Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 contains **weaknesses** in the design, implementation, compliance and enforcement.
- The lack of clarity of certain provisions results in **divergent transposition and implementation across the EU MS**. This creates an **uneven level playing** field for EU business operators and poses additional challenges to a proper and uniform enforcement by the CAs.
- **Several MS adopted additional rules** to implement Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 in their national legislation. E.g.:
 - Germany included two laws that requires a minimum stay on the dairy farm of 28 days and a maximum national transport duration of 8 hours, starting 01-01-2023.
 - Sweden prohibits long journeys on young unweaned animals

Mortality during and after transport

- The mortality rate of calves during and after long journeys for calves transported to the Netherlands is according to data from the industry approx. **1.5% in the first 56 days after arrival.**
- This rate is **similar** to the mortality rate of domestic calves and of unweaned calves that arrived after short-journeys.
- **Similar mortality rate** of calves during and after long journeys were reported **from Italy and Spain.**
- Research shows that the **most likely reason** for this that calves that were transported on long journeys were **heavier and older than domestic calves** at the moment of arrival.

Theme 2: Identification and analysis of existing alternatives

- To map and analyse the data related to different existing alternatives to the long-journeys of calves, both at EU and national levels.
 - **Replacement:** production methods in which long duration journeys do not occur at all
 - **Reduction:** production methods with significantly less long-journeys of calves
 - **Refinement:** production methods in which the negative impacts of long-journeys on the welfare of calves have been significantly mitigated

Replace long-journeys of unweaned calves

- Avoiding that unweaned non-replacement calves are born (breeding strategies to increase milk production)
- Fattening the calves on the dairy farm of birth,
- Fattening the calves on specialised fattening farms very close to the dairy farms of birth
- Using sexed dairy semen and beef semen to improve beef production characteristics of the non-replacement calves for fattening in the MS of birth



Reduce long-journeys of unweaned calves

- Voluntary or compulsory banning long-journeys and fattening in beef or veal farms in the close vicinity of the dairy farms.
 - This will affect veal and beef production both in the MS of origin and in the MS of destination.
 - It is likely that long-journeys will be replaced by short-journeys, increasing the number of unweaned calves transported on short journeys as well as the risk of assembly centre hopping.
 - A number of MS from which numbers of unweaned calves are currently transported on long-journeys will face serious challenges due to the lack of feasible alternatives on the short-term.

Refine long-journeys of unweaned calves:

- Best practices:
 - Sound documentary check and application process prior to transports;
 - Sound inspection of the transport vehicle and sound loading of animals;
 - Appropriate genetics and good management practices, optimal feeding strategy prior to transport.

Refine long-journeys of unweaned calves:

- Best practices (cont.1)
 - Optimal type of vehicle, ease of handling before, during and after transport;
 - Increasing the minimal age at which calves are allowed to be transported;
 - CA could implement stricter enforcement if malpractices occur.



Theme 3: Alternatives and best practices

- need for an integrated package to replace and reduce transport of unweaned calves.
- per MS a tailor-made strategy, that includes a blend of the described alternatives, should be applied.

Thanks for your attention

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