

Please note I have written in the form of a speech, as agreed. I am writing as if I was working for the NGO similar to that of Eurogroup For Animals, Slow Food , Animal Frontiers etc.

The Welfare Of Live Animals, (to be used for human food consumption) During Transport In The European Union And The United Kingdom.

We are all aware and understand, that animals have always been transported, initially by foot and then by various other forms , as transport methods developed and improved, from one place to another with many being used for the means of a human food source. However in 2024, is there really any need for the transportation of live animals across different countries, when they are to be slaughtered for human consumption. Modern refrigeration methods mean that the “meat” products can be very easily transported, without causing further pain, stress and suffering to the animals. We know that the live animals that actually survive the journeys, are often transported in cramped conditions and stand alongside dead or dying companions. We must remember that “Animal rights are a necessary condition of animal liberation”.(Cochrane.p,1.2012). Peter Singer argues in his book Animal Liberation that “ in assessing the consequences of our actions , it is necessary to take the interests of animals seriously”. (Singer. P. 1975).

Year after year, we see that millions and millions and millions ,of chickens, sheep, goats, horses, pigs and cattle are transported alive within the EU, as well as to countries outside of the EU. Eurogroup for Animals published a figure of “1,500,000,000 ovines, bovines, poultry and pigs were transported alive across the European Union and to non-European countries” in 2022 (Eurogroup for Animals,2024).These journeys can last several days or in fact in some cases can last several weeks .These unnecessary journeys not only expose the animals to exhaustion, dehydration, injury , disease, and death, but they also cause a substantial amount of stress to them. We have to also question what effect this stress has on the end product, the “meat”, which is desired by so many. Interestingly research has shown the effects of stress on an animal prior to slaughter causes the meat to be a darker colour, drier and with depleted muscle glycogen, which effects taste and tenderness (agproud.com,2024) . If the consumer was however aware to the extent of suffering and pain the animals were subjected to, plus the fact that they were being given an inferior quality product, would they still be in such favour of live animal transportation, within the meat trade.

The issue of livestock transportation posses many problems, perhaps one of the main issue is the the European Commission established a wide range of animal legislative provisions in 1974, surprisingly they have not updated their guidelines since 1991 when the first legislation was introduced on the protection of animals in transportation. (Directive 91/628/EEC)(Animal Frontiers, p4 .2022). Under EU treaties, “animals are recognised as sentiment beings, and in consequence, the EU and the member states must pay due regards to the welfare of farm animals”(European Commission,2024).

Whilst this legislation may be seen as one of the most advanced in the world, it still does not have the power to be able to put an end to the extreme suffering these livestock experience.

Consideration needs to be given to the numerous and varied stages of an animal's journey and we will look at these individually and try to address and offer solutions to help, improve and in some cases offer reasons to legislate to stop certain practices.

Firstly we should look at the transport time and distance from the point of production. As we have already stated some livestock are made to endure days, if not weeks of being transported from their country of production to their final destination country. An October 2023 "Eurobarometer" published by the EU commission found that 83% of the respondents agreed that "travel time for the transport of live animals within the EU (for 'commercial purposes') should be limited" (Eurogroup for Animals, 2024). The current data of journeys taking days and weeks is simply not justified. We do not ever want a repeat of the Dec 2020 incident, when 2,766 bovines either died during their journey or were euthanised upon their entry, to the middle Eastern port of Cartagena. These bovines had spent 79 days aboard 2 ships, having travelled from a Spanish port. It should be noted that these events still occurred even though the ships originated from a European port, under which the EU had set up requirements on livestock transport. This incident highlights the need for immediate action to stop all transport to non EU countries, who do not have the same level of livestock welfare regulations (Animal Frontiers, 2022, p.2). Before embarking on any transportation of livestock, we should also ascertain the final destinations animal welfare standards and that the livestock will actually be able to unload.

During audits, cases of unweaned animals have been uncovered. (Eurogroup for animals, 2023). These animals have no means of eating and drinking during their journeys and often these journeys last more than 60 hours (GOV.UK, 2023). These unweaned animals, usually calves for the veal market, suffer undeniably on these long journeys and our view is that the transport of unweaned animals should be banned.

Then we need to focus on the transport design, condition and stocking density. Whilst these vehicles are so called designed for purpose, the animals that are expected to travel in them are not used at all to travelling in vehicles and especially not for long distances. This becomes more apparent when we look at animals that have been reared in extensive systems, such as factory or mega farms. One recommendation by the FESA would be that species specific temperature and space conditions are introduced and strongly enforced. (Slow Food, 2023).

Another important factor is the transport driver's skill, competence and planning. The livestock face danger from a less than careful driver, it is common for animals to sustain broken limbs. The final carcass value is affected should there be bruising on the product. Also hardy local breeds that will have most likely spent their life's up until this point outside, with very little restraints and transport struggle on even the shortest journey.

Along with European Commission official reports, non official NGO reports and comprehensive scientific reports, it has been widely noted that the regulation is not being acted on correctly and therefore offers little protection to the animals. It has been found that the areas of special concern are that of "fitness for transport, loading and unloading" (Animal Frontiers, 2022, p.17).

When we look at the watering, feeding intervals and rest periods are these sufficient and what changes can be made to make the journey easier for the animal being transported. Again the legislation in place are extremely difficult to enforce, reducing the travel times would of course make a positive impact on the livestock, but they would need to be again policed and enforced. The EFSA recommends that travel times are drastically reduced to a maximum of 8 hours , which is reduced to 4 hours for poultry and rabbits (slow food, 2023)and this whilst not be ideal , it does however go some way to improving the life quality of the livestock.During the transportation the monitoring of the animals health and welfare must be paramount.

We therefore suggest and recommend that there should be a complete ban on any livestock being exported to third countries, as it has been noted that once livestock leaves the EU then it is incredibly different, if not impossible to monitor and control what happens. Often livestock are “exposed to awful experiences and handling on arrival at their destination” (Eurogroup for animals, 2023). As a member of Europe, similar future requirements to export are also required for import. Each country has varying standards of animal welfare and we should not allow the import of products, that undermine the welfare impacts of the EU legislations. It is possible that “these measures could lead to a reterritorialization of food production, boosting rural economies, and increasing the food cultures of consumers”(slow food,2023).

Perhaps one of the controversial areas is the export of livestock for them to be slaughtered by the non-stun method. We feel that there is never any justification for any form of livestock to be transported, only to be slaughtered by the non stun method. Why would we agree and allow livestock from one country to be transported to another country, for it to be slaughtered by a method outlawed in the country the livestock were transported from. At present the European Unions Regulation1099/2009 - Killing of animals allows “ slaughter without stunning in a contest of ritual slaughter (for the production of halal or kosher meat) provided that it takes place in a slaughterhouse” (European Commission,2024). In our opinion slaughter without stunning is not acceptable on any grounds.

One development related to the final stage of the animals life would be that of the development of mobile slaughterhouses and even on farm slaughter facilities. As we have seen previously the less stress that the animal incurs ,results in a higher premium end product.

As Peter Singer has suggested, we should follow a “preference” form of utilitarianism and include the interest of all whether human or non human, sadly we see that humans fail at this due to their “species bias”, with humans taking the superior viewpoint and showing, little if any concern, at times to other non human species.(Singer,1975,p.8). Singer would go on to note that this “speciesist stance, ...is similar to racism and sexism” (Singer,1975,p.11) and for which we already acknowledge to be totally morally indefensible.

We as a worldwide community, are now more than aware that any movement of livestock has on the impact to health and wellbeing of the animals involved, as well as a global environmental impact, which in turn effects us all. Unfortunately we will see that any additional updates on the legal requirements in the transport of livestock, can only be effective , if and only if, these regulations are effectively and totally enforced.

Perhaps the positive solution would be for the EU to investigate the huge benefits of moving from a live transport industry , to one of a carcass and meat industry only. This would not only end unnecessary suffering to millions of live animals, but we are already aware that the environmental, social and economic advantages are well and truly proven.

So, initially we would call for far more frequent inspections, with an emphasise being put on an animal being classed as fit to travel, this would of course stop the unnecessary suffering to animals that should not be subjected to a journey, when it is not in a fit state initially to do so. With the eventual goal that all livestock transportation would cease, with the only exception being of course allowing for the movement of livestock within individual countries only to slaughterhouses, but this would be with the written caveat in the regulation, of only permitting the use of the closet slaughterhouses for every journey undertaken.

One positive effect of Brexit is that it has improved the lives of livestock in the United Kingdom(European Commission,2024). The UK is the highest ranked nation in G7, as per the World Animal Protection's Index (GOV.UK,2023) for animal welfare regulations . The Animal Welfare(Livestock Exports) Bill, which was introduced by the British Parliament and came into force on the 4th December 2023, delivers a total ban on the export of live animals which includes, cattle, horses, goats, pigs and sheep. This legislation has finally put an end to horrendous journeys livestock had previously endured and the unnecessary stress, injury and death, that these journeys caused them.

We can only hope that the EU and other countries choose to follow this advancement of animal welfare in the United Kingdom and also introduce the ban of livestock transportation. Interestingly the value of British meat has increased since this legislation has been introduced. The UK has a level of high welfare in their slaughterhouses and with effect ensures that British meat is regarded as a premium product (GOV.UK,2023) this in turn is seen to be boasting the UK's economy. Hopefully the UK stance is the start of a far reaching view on future treatment of livestock transportation across the globe. There is some positive news on the horizon, amongst the European Commissions proposal for the revision of animal welfare, a legislation has been proposed to have in place a "Sustainable Food Systems Framework Law"(slow food.2023). The aim of this proposal is to ensure that a future transition to sustainable food system is made easier, but at the same time is promoting a policy coherence at national level and EU level. It is hoped that eventually with systems in place that a " transition towards a more plant based diet" (slow food, 2023) will be easier and achievable. With continual lobbying and pressure on governments, it is hoped that one day this goal can be reached.

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