

World Organisation for Animal Health

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France



BAN LIVE EXPORTS

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Dear

- Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran, Director General of WOAHA
- Excellencies, Regional representatives for the global WOAHA regions
- Excellencies, Veterinary Authority representatives of WOAHA's 183 member countries

Long distance transport of live animals

The signatories of this letter are pleased that the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) is revising its recommendations on the transport of animals. We recognise that this is a thorough process involving WOAHA officials, the Code Commission and Veterinary Authority representatives from 183 countries, and we support a science-based process that strengthens the practical implementation of WOAHA's animal welfare principles.

As we observe positive policy change globally to end the trade - such as a ban on live exports from Great Britain and New Zealand, the upcoming ban on sheep exports by sea from Australia and the withdrawal of veterinary export certificates in Germany for several categories of live animals to third countries - we welcome all effective steps to improve welfare, reduce journey lengths and ultimately end this cruel and unsustainable trade.

We therefore call on you, and all stakeholders, to use this current revision as a critical opportunity to bring the long-distance transport of live animals to an end. Indeed, this is recognised in principle by the current Terrestrial Animal Health Code and the latest draft for consolidated Chapter 7.2 stating that:

"Longer journeys increase risks to animal welfare." and recommending that **"Journeys should be kept as short as possible."**

We urge that these principles underscore the revisions made for the transport of live animals, alongside the growing evidence of animal welfare science* that the long-distance transport of live farmed animals causes pain and suffering.

As highlighted by recent geopolitical dynamics involving conflict zones, ships carrying cattle and sheep have been sent to conflict-affected regions, putting crew and animals at risk of protracted delays, injuries and death.

Most very long journeys are by sea and experience over the years - together with reports by veterinarians - shows that these journeys often involve serious problems for the animals involved. This includes large build-ups of faeces and slurry in the animal

pens; wet and soiled bedding; dirty water and feed troughs; overcrowding; high temperatures, extreme humidity and inadequate ventilation; injuries, some of which require euthanasia; and malnutrition, even starvation as some animals do not recognise the feed provided on board the ships as being edible.

In addition to these habitual problems, periodic disasters - such as when vessels capsize - have led to the death of many seafarers and tens of thousands of animals, often by drowning. Also, animals can be stranded at sea for weeks or months due to disease or importers refusing to accept the animals.

Long road journeys, too, are problematic. Particularly when trucks are overcrowded, and temperatures are high, animals can become increasingly exhausted, dehydrated and stressed as the long journeys wear on. Some get injured and collapse onto the floor of the truck, where they risk being trampled by their companions.

Moreover, the long-distance transport of animals in crowded, stressful, hot, unsanitary conditions may undermine their immune system, making them vulnerable to infections, including zoonoses. The animals can transmit these pathogens during the journey, leading to the transboundary spread of diseases, especially across boundaries.

In conclusion, during the current revision of its recommendations on animal transport, we respectfully urge WOAHA and its members to strengthen the guidance and enforcement in a manner that further improves animal welfare, reduces disease risk and ends the transport of animals to conflict-affected regions and regions that repeatedly fail to enforce animal welfare legislation.

Such revisions should be an urgent step towards ending the long-distance transport of live farmed animals and replacing it with the transport of carcasses, meat, milk powder and genetic material.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Stevenson OBE

Chief Policy Advisor

Compassion in World Farming

On behalf of 135 global animal protection partners, academics and high-profile supporters.

*

1. European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), [Welfare of cattle during transport](#), EFSA Journal (2022)
2. EFSA Plain Language Summary – [Welfare of cattle during transport](#)
3. EURCAW –summary of [EFSA Scientific Opinion](#)
4. WOAHA Europe – [summary of EFSA transport findings](#)
5. Earley B, Buckham Sporer K, Gupta S. [Relationship between cattle transport, immunity and respiratory disease](#). Animal. 2017.

6. Qi J et al. [Multi-omics investigation into long-distance road transportation effects on respiratory health and immunometabolic responses in calves](#). Microbiome. 2024.
7. Jakes GM et al. [Transport stress induces paradoxical increases in airway inflammatory responses in beef stocker cattle](#). PLOS ONE. 2025.

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Americas:





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