

Appendix LT.7

Determining Fitness to Travel

These notes are taken from the Defra Publication: “WELFARE OF ANIMALS DURING TRANSPORT GUIDANCE NOTES Part 2aA FITNESS TO TRANSPORT”

See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/farmed/transport/pdf/fitness2a.pdf>

(Bolds are direct quotations from legislation. Normal type is guidance).

- 1. No animal shall be transported unless it is fit for the intended journey, and all animals shall be transported in conditions guaranteed not to cause them injury or unnecessary suffering.**
- 2. Animals that are injured or that present physiological weaknesses or pathological processes shall not be considered fit for transport and in particular if:**

(a) they are unable to move independently without pain or to walk unassisted:

- The animal must be able to walk freely and unassisted on all limbs without any need for more than usual encouragement. An animal showing signs of lameness is likely to be in pain and must not be transported, unless for reasons of veterinary diagnosis or treatment. Animals generally should not be pushed or dragged, and nor should any mechanical apparatus be used to load them onto vehicles (except pneumatic tailgates, but the animal must walk onto these freely) unless there are clear benefits to the welfare of the animal. Lameness can usually be detected by good observation of the affected animal, or by comparing that animal with other animals in the group.
- Lameness is a common condition in livestock. There are very few circumstances where lameness is not a painful condition. As a general rule therefore, any animal that is suffering lameness in one or more legs must not be transported.
- Whenever a lame animal is transported, the journey conditions will need to be improved. It will usually be necessary to pen the animal singly, ensure the floor provides good footing, provide sufficient space for the animal to lie down, provide deep litter bedding for comfort, and the driver should take special care to avoid any sudden changes in speed or direction that might throw the animal off balance.

(b) they present a severe open wound, or prolapse:

- Animals with any wounds entering a body cavity, such as the chest or abdomen, or the groin are not fit for transport. If a wound is bleeding freely, or has become infected, the animal will be unfit. Any other sizable skin wound that is actively bleeding (other than ear tags damaged during loading in the case of livestock) makes an animal unfit. For animals with wounds that are healing or under active veterinary treatment, where the wound is small, almost healed, non-infected and not causing the animal any pain, then the animal may be fit for transport. Animals with larger wounds that are supported and dressed adequately to prevent them from worsening during transport may be fit if careful attention is given to the conditions of transport.
- Prolapses occur where body organs and tissues move from their normal position within a body cavity. The prolapse may be ‘internal’, e.g. inguinal or umbilical prolapses, where the prolapsed tissue is covered by an intact layer of skin and might only be seen as an abnormal swelling beneath the skin. Rectal or vaginal prolapses are ‘external’; here the displaced tissue is exposed to the environment. Animals with external prolapses, are not fit for transport, unless the prolapse is small, as it could easily be damaged during transport. Animals with internal prolapses may be fit for transport if the prolapse is not causing pain and is unlikely to worsen or become damaged during the journey. Animals with ruptured prolapses must not be transported. For livestock, attempts should be made to correct any external prolapse well before moving the animal. An animal suffering from a prolapse can only be transported in limited circumstances – usually for treatment or slaughter. The prolapse must be small, nonpainful, not bleeding, and must be protected during transport, for example by single penning and deep bedding the animal.

(c) they are pregnant females for whom 90 % or more of the expected gestation period has already passed, or females who have given birth in the previous week.

(d) they are newborn mammals in which the navel has not completely healed.

Appendix LT.7 (continued)

Determining Fitness to Travel

(e) they are pigs of less than three weeks, lambs of less than one week and calves of less than ten days of age, unless they are transported less than 100 km:

- The rules on fitness for transport in Annex I of EC Regulation 1/2005 do not apply to transport carried out by farmers of their own animals, in their own vehicles, for a distance of less than 50 km from their holding (it should be noted, however, that general conditions for transport set out in Article 3 still apply). This means that a farmer may transport his own late pregnant stock, and newly born stock, short distances between or within nearby farm premises, or make use of a haulier to undertake such movements, where the purpose is to improve the conditions of birth. Pregnant animals must not be moved when birth is imminent, however.

Such transport must not cause unnecessary pain or suffering and should be undertaken only for reasons of improving the welfare of the animals around the time of birth.

3. However, sick or injured animals may be considered fit for transport if they are:

(a) slightly injured or ill and transport would not cause additional suffering; in cases of doubt, veterinary advice shall be sought:

In certain circumstances the transport of slightly ill or injured animals is permissible. The judgement of what is 'slightly ill or injured' will be difficult in many cases. The following considerations should be taken into account:

- The condition should only be minor and have little impact on the animal's ability to withstand transport.
- Transport must not cause the animal to suffer unnecessarily or more so than if it had not been transported; the condition must not worsen during transport.
- It is advisable to have any slightly ill or injured animal assessed by a veterinary surgeon before considering transport. A veterinarian can provide an informed opinion and advise on whether and how an animal might be moved.
- Where there is any doubt or disagreement, it is better not to transport it.
- Each case must be judged individually, and the welfare of the animal must be the first consideration. Where there is any doubt, a veterinary surgeon should be consulted. After examination of the animal, the vet may offer advice on whether transport would be acceptable, or indicate that the animal is only fit for a short journey where the transport conditions are improved to benefit the animal's welfare. Animals that are slightly ill or injured will usually benefit from, and in many cases require improved transport conditions.
- Animals that are slightly ill or injured may be transported under very limited circumstances. They may be transported to a veterinary surgery for purposes of diagnosis or treatment, and in some cases, it may be acceptable to transport the animals direct from a farm to the nearest available slaughterhouse for immediate slaughter. This provision would allow farmers to transport small numbers of livestock with mild to moderate lameness direct from the farm of origin to a slaughterhouse. In addition to ensuring that the official veterinarian of the slaughterhouse will accept the animals in question, the transporter must ensure that additional requirements during transport are met to protect the welfare of lame livestock. Lame animals must be transported in improved conditions: each lame animal should be penned singly, given sufficient space to lie down, and adequately deep bedded for comfort. The transporter must move the animals directly from the farm to the slaughterhouse and careful driving should be practised throughout the journey. In all circumstances, the transport of slightly ill or injured animals must not cause any unnecessary suffering or necessitate any ill treatment of the animals concerned. Slightly ill or injured animals, including lame animals, must not be transported to or presented for sale at markets.

(b) transported for the purposes of Council Directive 86/609/EEC 1 if the illness or injury is part of a research programme.

(c) transported under veterinary supervision for or following veterinary treatment or diagnosis. However, such transport shall be permitted only where no unnecessary suffering or ill treatment is caused to the animals concerned.

(d) animals that have been submitted to veterinary procedures in relation to farming practices such as dehorning or castration, provided that wounds have completely healed.