

25 July 2024

Commissioner Kyriakides
Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
European Commission

Dear Commissioner,

Action by Commission needed to end the unlawful transport of unweaned calves from Ireland to France

In its audit report dated 22 December 2023 (DG(SANTE) 2022-7503) the Commission made it clear that in its view the transport of unweaned calves from Ireland to France is being carried out in breach of Regulation 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport.

This is because the Commission interprets the Regulation as requiring unweaned calves to be fed during the long sea crossing by roll-on roll-off (RORO) ferry from Ireland to France. However, the calves are not fed during the crossing; indeed it is not possible to feed unweaned calves while they are on a truck which is on board a RORO ferry. Feed in the case of unweaned calves is milk replacer.

Despite the Commission's audit report, Ireland continues to export large numbers of unweaned calves. Shortly after arrival in France, they are unloaded at a lairage near Cherbourg. After a 12-13 hour rest, they are reloaded and transported by road to other Member States including the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Romania, Poland, Hungary and Croatia. 158,000 calves have been exported this year to date.

In its Recommendations the audit report states:

“The [Irish] competent authorities are requested to provide, within 25 working days of receipt of the report, details of the actions taken and planned, including deadlines for their completion (“action plan”), aimed at addressing the recommendations set out below.

Recommendation 4. To ensure that unweaned calves are fed on roll-on roll-off vessels in compliance with the maximum feeding intervals, as required by Point 1.4(a) of Chapter V of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 1/2005.”

We presume the Irish competent authorities have not provided an action plan to implement the above Recommendation 4 as calves are currently being transported from Ireland to France without being fed during the RORO journey.

As calf exports from Ireland are being conducted in breach of Regulation 1/2005 as interpreted by the Commission, we urge the Commission to take effective measures to halt this trade. We hope you will agree with us that it is unacceptable for animals to be regularly transported in breach of EU animal protection legislation and that when the Member State concerned declines to act, the Commission must take steps to ensure that the legislation is respected.

The length of time that unweaned calves go without feed on the journey from Ireland to France

Calves exported from Ireland may be on a truck for some 5-9 hours - in some cases longer - before the ferry to France leaves Ireland. This time includes loading onto the truck, the journey to the port, and waiting at the port before the truck embarks on the ferry. In some cases the trucks arrive at the port four hours before the ferry is due to sail. Moreover, it may be around three hours before loading onto the truck since the calves were last fed.

The ferry journey to Cherbourg takes 18 hours and a further at least 1.5 hours - in some cases longer - is needed to drive to the control post near Cherbourg, for unloading and before all the calves get feed. Indeed, investigations show that some calves have to wait a long time to be fed after arrival at the control post as feeding all the calves that have been carried on the ferry is a lengthy process.

In all the calves may go for 27 hours, or in some cases substantially more, without feed between the last feed before loading at the start of the journey and receiving feed at the control post near Cherbourg.

We again urge the Commission to take action in respect of the breaches of Regulation 1/2005 that it identified in its audit report.

Yours sincerely,
The undersigned organisations



animaleQUALITY

ANIMAL PROTECTION DENMARK



Animals INTERNATIONAL



Dier&Recht
advocaat van de dieren

EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS



Dyrevernalliansen



RSPCA.

