



Dyreveralliansen



**ANIMAL PROTECTION
DENMARK**



**Eyes on
Animals** | Watching
out for their
welfare



Dier&Recht
advocaat van de dieren



Niclas Mårtensson
CEO
Stena Line Limited
405 19 Gothenburg
Sweden

Please reply to:
caroline@ethicalfarmingireland.com

12th February 2025

Dear Mr Mårtensson

On 25th July 2024 an open letter was sent to you, by post and email, over concerns that Stena Line continues to transport unweaned calves on the Rosslare to Cherbourg route, despite the European Commission's assessment that the trade is being carried out in breach of EU animal welfare legislation. The Commission concluded that the calves are not being fed within the required timeframe, following an audit conducted in June 2022¹. The letter was signed by 24 NGOs and to date no reply has been received.²

The letter has been preceded by years of meetings, emails, letters and petitions, by several NGOs from differing member states, along with several protests at Rosslare port. There have been many articles in the news highlighting the cruelty of the industry and non-compliance with legislation and official complaints to the European Commission – see Annex below. In July 2022 Ethical Farming Ireland launched legal proceedings against the Irish State in relation to the export of unweaned calves and the case is ongoing. Stena Line has been inextricably linked with all the controversy at every stage.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit-report/details/4700>

² <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/media/7458414/open-letter-to-stena-line-ferries-1.pdf>

There have been meetings with NGOs at the Stena Line head office in London: one in 2019, and the most recent on 30th September 2024, that was attended by Ian Hampton and representatives from Dyrevernalliansen, Four Paws and Ethical Farming Ireland. At both meetings a petition was submitted to Stena Line signed by many thousand members of the public from across Europe.

A further petition was delivered in November 2020 at an online meeting with Stena Line representatives, attended by Eyes on Animals and The Swedish Association for the Protection of Animals, with over 22,000 signatures. It is clear that this subject is of great concern to many citizens across Europe, but unfortunately there have been no positive outcomes following any of the meetings or petition deliveries.

In March 2021 Ethical Farming Ireland submitted a formal complaint to the European Commission, stating that Stena Line is transporting unweaned calves from Ireland to continental Europe in ways that breach Regulation 1/2005, that the Irish Authorities have failed to take appropriate steps under Article 26.4 of Regulation 1/2005 in respect of those breaches, and in particular has failed to take steps to prevent recurrence of the breaches by Stena Line. The complaint was not upheld, but only because the Commission claimed no evidence had been provided to show calves are not being fed during the ferry journey. Now that the Commission has obtained evidence through it's own audit, Ethical Farming Ireland submitted a further complaint that is still under review. Dutch NGO Eyes on Animals has also submitted a formal complaint.

An article was published in Belfast Live in May 2021 following the first complaint to the Commission.³ There are a number of quotes from a Stena Line representative including stating it "will only allow the continued transportation of livestock on its vessels, if EU requirements are met and the sector improves the welfare of livestock." EU requirements are not being met, and the welfare of unweaned calves during the journey from Ireland to France has not improved. The spokesperson said: "Stena Line takes its duty of care for the welfare of live animals very seriously." However, the actions by Stena Line do not match these words. The European Commission has concluded from the audit conducted in June 2022 that these journeys are not in line with legislation, yet Stena Line continues to transport calves.

In July 2023 Irish television broadcaster RTÉ Investigates aired 'Dairy's Dirty Secret' exposing cruel practices in the calf export industry, abuse at Irish marts and extended periods with no feed during the gruelling ferry journey from Rosslare to Cherbourg. The programme featured the Stena Horizon ferry boat, linking the company to very significant suffering of young and vulnerable animals.

In October 2024, RTÉ Investigates again exposed highly abusive treatment of unweaned calves in their programme 'On the Hoof,' this time featuring the Stena Vision. The programme included evidence that calves transported to Europe, via Stena Line, have ended up being shipped to Israel. Once again Stena Line is inextricably linked to animal suffering.

Stena Line is propping up an unsustainable and inhumane industry, which is at odds with your sustainability and cultural goals. If Stena Line stopped transporting unweaned calves, dairy farmers would be pushed into seeking alternatives for their calves, which would help lead to higher welfare and more sustainable practices. There are many other options for male dairy calves and in fact only a small percentage are exported. Nonetheless, those that are exported experience poor welfare and significant suffering. The industry will never change while it is supported by Stena Line.

³ <https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/belfast-news/stena-line-vows-act-over-20593037>

30 years ago Stena Line ceased transporting livestock from the UK, and Ireland is now the only country from which Stena Line continues to do so. In recent years Stena Line has been repeatedly and publicly linked to animal suffering, in relation to the transportation of young and vulnerable animals. We are fully committed to putting an end to this inhumane trade and strongly urge Stena Line to take the moral high ground and do what is right for the animals and for the environment, rather than continue to be publicly embroiled in controversy.

Yours sincerely

Anima International Denmark: Joh Vinding CEO
Animal Law Italia: Alessandro Ricciuti CEO
Animal Protection Denmark: Britta Riis CEO
Compassion in World Farming: Peter Stevenson OBE Chief Policy Advisor
Caring Vets: Nicole de Schwartz President
Dier&Recht: Frederieke Schouten CEO and Veterinarian
Djurskyddet Sverige: Åsa Hagelstedt Secretary General
Dyrevern Alliansen: Anton Krag CEO and Zoologist
Dzīvnieku Brīvība: Katrina Krigere CEO
Eesti Loomakaitse Selts: Kaisa Kaljurand CEO
Ethical Farming Ireland: Caroline Rowley Director
Eyes on Animals: Lesley Moffat Director
Four Paws European Policy Office: Joe Moran Director of Four Paws Belgium
Hellenic Animal Welfare Federation: Irini Molfessi Chair of the Board
Loomus - Animal Advocacy Organisation: Anu Tensing Board Member
Project 1882: Benny Andersson CEO
Svenska Djurskyddsöreningen: Lillemor Wodmar President
World Animal Protection Denmark & Sweden: Roger Pettersson CEO

Annex

<https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/ethical-farming-ireland-to-protest-at-rosslare-this-weekend/>

<https://www.independent.ie/farming/news/department-launches-dairy-beef-action-plan-as-animal-rights-activists-put-pressure-on-ferry-companies/a980243564.html>

<https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/efi-submits-complaint-to-eu-over-transport-of-unweaned-calves/>

<https://www.independent.ie/farming/news/ferry-companies-cannot-bow-to-pressure-on-calf-exports/a1157001945.html>

<https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wexford/wexford-district/protests-against-conditions-endured-by-animals-exported-from-rosslare-europort-trucks-passed-us-filled-with-bawling-calves/a230520595.html>

<https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/stena-line-urged-to-stop-transporting-irish-calves-by-dutch-group/>