

COM/2023/770 Proposal for a Regulation on the protection of animals during transport and related operations, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1255/97 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005

Consultation Response - The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA)

Impact of EU Act

1 Does it appear likely that the proposed EU act would have a significant negative impact specific to everyday life of communities in Northern Ireland in a way that is liable to persist?

Yes

Tell us why:

The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) is a registered charity which specialises in the welfare of livestock from leaving the farm to the point of slaughter. Our remit is focused on animal welfare during marketing, transport and slaughter.

The proposed regulation is designed to improve animal welfare during transport, which we support. If implemented, the proposal will directly impact the operation of the livestock and aquaculture sectors within Northern Ireland. Consumers of these products will also be indirectly impacted by the changing welfare requirements and cost/logistical implications. Improving animal welfare is often considered to be a public good and is a matter of significant public interest.

Meeting the requirements of the new legislation will incur financial and logistical costs. Support should be provided to the impacted sectors to ensure that the regulation can be implemented. Measures should also be taken to encourage understanding and support from consumers, if price rises or changes to product availability are expected.

2 Does it appear likely that NOT APPLYING the proposed EU act would have a significant negative impact specific to everyday life of communities in Northern Ireland in a way that is liable to persist?

Yes

Tell us why:

Only impacts in relation to animal welfare fall within the HSA's remit.

If the proposed legislation were applied within the EU but not in Northern Ireland, the welfare of animals transported within Northern Ireland could fall behind that of the EU. This represents an opportunity cost to the transported animals, which could have experienced improved welfare. Reduced likelihood of better animal welfare could be

argued to be against the public interest, given that animal welfare is often considered to be a public good.

3 Are there any other matters regarding the proposed EU act that you wish to draw to the Committee's attention? Please note, any information provided should be of an evidential nature rather than a commentary.

Yes

Tell us why:

The HSA understands the proposal will undergo further discussion and refinement through the EU legislative processes. Hence, a detailed, specific commentary on the likely impacts has not been provided at this stage. However, some comments, including sections adapted from our response to the 2020 Defra consultation on improvements to animal welfare in transport have been highlighted below:

Maximum journey times:

HSA supports the principle of limiting journey times, as well as limiting the frequency of loading and unloading.

Journey length is important, both in terms of distance and duration. For example, a journey of 20 miles which takes two hours is likely to be more distressing to livestock, especially in hot weather, than a journey of 60 miles which takes a similar time. This may be due to increased humidity and temperatures within the container, caused by delays or slow-moving traffic; or motion sickness caused by travel on minor roads rather than A-roads and motorways; or a combination of the two. Long journeys give cause for concern because the risk of stressors affecting the welfare of the animals is increased: the longer the journey, the longer the animal is exposed to continuous stressors such as movement/vibration/noise.

The welfare risks to animals are increased during transport. Animals can be exposed to a variety of stressors with a varying degree of impact on their welfare. These stressors include loading and unloading, during which there may be forced physical exertion, changes in social groupings, unfamiliar environments and unfamiliar handlers, exposure to noise, vibration and lateral movement and acceleration/deceleration, nausea (e.g. travel-sickness in pigs), temperature and humidity, aggression from other animals, deprivation of food and fluids, accidents and, on occasion, mistreatment. Different species and individuals within species (for example, because of age, health status and genetic or developmental differences) have varying capacities to withstand any impact of travel.

Injuries can also occur to individuals during the journey. Injured animals are likely to suffer more with longer journeys and a lack of fluids and/or food, which obviously becomes more of a stressor with time, in circumstances where it is either impractical to

provide these during transport (e.g. for poultry), or because animals do not, or take a long time to, accept food and water during rest periods (e.g. sheep). The risk of accidents, while generally low, will also increase with journey time.

However, we accept that well-planned and managed journeys can reduce some of these risks and their impact. Transport that involves a change from road to sea or air can also increase risks. Sea journeys for example may involve increased motion – pitch, roll and yaw in addition to forward and backward movement.

If animals need to be transported longer distances for whatever reason, the quality of the journey rather than the length (distance and duration) is considered to be of the most importance. As stated before: it is widely accepted that loading and unloading are the two components of livestock journeys that pose the major potential animal welfare issues. Therefore, measures to mitigate this must be encouraged, such as infrastructures to facilitate level loading/unloading and minimise ramp angles, lifting decks to eliminate internal ramps and allowing animals time to load and unload without being forced.

Vulnerable animals:

The HSA supports the principle of limiting journey times and the frequency of loading and unloading for unweaned (suckling) animals.

A minimum age of five weeks and minimum weight 50kg for transporting unweaned calves over 100km has been proposed. The HSA is broadly in support of measures restricting the transport of unweaned calves; however, it acknowledges the dairy sector would likely require support to restructure and make such a change feasible. The 100km journey limit appears not to have been included in the original impact assessment, and consideration should be given as to whether this exception is necessary, subject to an assessment of the welfare impact of shorter journeys. Transport of unweaned calves younger than 28 days is already banned in Germany (EC Overview Report on The Protection of Unweaned Calves During Long Journeys, 2023).

The HSA also supports a reduction in the maximum percentage of the gestation period that can have passed for transport of pregnant animals.

Transport in extreme temperatures:

The HSA agrees with the principle of not prohibiting transport during extreme temperatures but mitigating associated risks.

The proposed regulation does not specify a need for temperature monitoring equipment. This is a current requirement and the HSA suggests this is maintained.

Domestic birds and rabbits are provided with fewer protections against transport in extreme temperatures in the proposed legislation. Consideration should be given to

whether additional restrictions should also be introduced for these species, subject to assessment of the feasibility and welfare impact.

Based on the current proposals, the HSA would particularly like to see an impact assessment for the proposal.

Chapter 5. 2.3. b) states that “end-of-lay hens shall not be transported if temperatures inside vehicles of at least 15°C cannot be ensured.” How many journeys might be affected by this restriction and what are the proposed solutions for hen transport/slaughter?

Space allowances:

Stocking densities have an impact on animal welfare in transit, especially regarding temperature and humidity. The HSA supports the notion of using allometric principles to calculate optimum stocking densities. That said, the following points must also be considered:

- 1) For a given age, weight and class of animals within a species, the optimum stocking density will vary according to the length of journey (duration), temperature and humidity.
- 2) The variables listed above will vary according to season, prevailing weather conditions, time of year and altitude.
- 3) On long journeys in some climates, it may be necessary to alter the stocking densities at different stages of the journey.

Aquatic animals:

The HSA supports extending legal protection to the transport of decapods and cephalopods.

Enforcement:

The proposed Regulation makes changes intended to improve enforcement, which the HSA supports in principle.

The legislation controlling the welfare of animals during transport has been reviewed and updated several times; the current legislation came into force in January 2007. If implemented properly and effectively, livestock transport within the UK can be, and is mostly, of a very high standard. Paragraph 63 of the 2019 FAWC report Opinion on the Welfare of Animals During Transport, states:

"Enforcement of the EU Regulation 1/2005 was one of the main concerns for stakeholders. If the EU Regulation is properly enforced, then this would allow animals to be transported within, or outside of the UK, with reasonable levels of protection. One recurring reported issue regarding enforcement was variable interpretation and implementation between the Member States and regions (and within the UK).

Enforcement of the EU Regulation was also identified in the EC Commission's report as an area of concern. "

Reasons for this lack of enforcement are given as lack of training, variable interpretation of the legislation and lack of resources, both human and financial. Therefore, any changes made to the legislation, need to be backed up by proper, effective enforcement.