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CONSUMER POLICY AND CONSUMER HEALTH PROTECTION
Food and Veterinary Office
Unit 01 - Food of Animal Origin (1) - Mammals

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FINAL

MISSION REPORT

on a veterinary mission to IRELAND, carried out from

November 10th to November 11th, 1998

February 16th to February 19th, 1999

March 7th, 1999

and March 16th, 1999

**in the field of animal welfare during transport
(Directive 91/628/EEC),
also covering some aspects of animal identification
and animal health**

This final version of the mission report has been prepared to take into account some of the comments made by the Irish *Department of Agriculture and Food*, Dublin, dated 23.7.1999 (Commission Document XXIV/1491/98 – CM). In relation to the former draft version modifications are in points 5.2.2., 5.3.2.1., 5.3.5., 7.1., 8.1. and in headlines of several points.



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1. MISSION DETAILS

- 1.1. As the Food and Veterinary Office is based in Ireland, it was decided to make use of the short travelling distances involved and to choose sites to be visited whenever activities of particular interest could be observed. Thus the main visits took place from February 16th to February 19th, 1999, whereas sea-transport of cattle was observed on November 10th and 11th, 1998 and a “horse fair” was visited on March 7th, 1999.
- 1.2. One out of two veterinary experts at a time represented the Irish Department of Agriculture Food and Forestry, Dublin, and one or two veterinary experts represented the Commission’s Food and Veterinary Office, also based in Dublin, in the visiting team.
- 1.3. Three livestock markets (transfer points for road transport), two ports (transfer points for road/sea transport) and a horse fair (transfer point for road transport) were visited in Ireland, all sites being busy on the respective days of the visits.
- 1.4. A closing meeting was held in Dublin on 16.3.1999.

2. SCOPE OF THE MISSION

- 2.1. To verify whether the requirements of Council Directive 91/628/EEC on the protection of animals during transport (as last amended by Council Directive 95/29/EC) have been transposed and are applied in Ireland, with particular reference to long-distance transports by road and sea.
- 2.2. To verify whether animals transported are identified in accordance with Council Directive 92/102/EC on the identification and registration of animals and Council Regulation (EC) No. 820/97 establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals.
- 2.3. To verify whether horses at a particular Irish transfer point are handled in compliance with Council Directive 91/628/EEC and whether this transfer point meets the requirements of Council Directive 90/426/EEC on animal health conditions governing the movement and import from third countries of equidae.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. A veterinary mission, carried out in Ireland by the European Commission in November 1995 in the field of animal welfare during transport had noted, among other things, poor livestock vehicles, unsatisfactory hygienic and maintenance conditions on livestock markets, shortcomings in the identification of sheep and pigs and unsatisfactory veterinary supervision of unloading and loading on certain Irish livestock markets (Commission Documents VI/7498-1/95 of 17.1.1996 and VI/7499/95 of 26.1.1996). The mission report for the 1995 mission had stated at the same time, however, that

the majority of officials and other persons met during the 1995 mission had well been aware of the necessity to protect animals at all levels, and handling of animals as well as fitness for transport status had been acceptable.

- 3.2. The present mission was undertaken by the European Commission to evaluate progress in Ireland in the aforementioned areas.

4. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION

Commission Decision 98/139/EC in connection with:

Article 10 of Council Directive 91/628/EEC,

Council Directive 64/432/EEC on health problems affecting intra-Community trade in bovine animals and swine, as amended and updated by Council Directive 97/12/EC,

Article 3 of Council Directive 92/102/EEC,

Council Regulation (EC) No. 820/97,

Article 10 of Council Directive 90/426/EEC.

5. MAIN FINDINGS (INFORMATION RECEIVED AND FACTS FOUND)

5.1. Transposition of EC legislation on animal welfare during transport into national legislation

- 5.1.1. Council Directive 91/628/EEC (as last amended by Council Directive 95/29/EC) has been transposed into Irish legislation by the *Diseases of Animals (Protection of Animals during Transport) Order, 1995* of 26.4.1995, as amended by Order of 28.7.1997.
- 5.1.2. For the evaluation of the results of the actual mission it was of particular importance to note that the Irish legislation cited in point 5.1.1. foresees that even transport of animals carried out up to a distance of 50 km, has to be in compliance with the essential rules laid down in Directive 91/628/EEC, e.g. with regard to the basic requirements for means of transport (see point 5.3.14.).
- 5.1.3. Ireland, unlike most of the other Member States, has detailed legislation on sea transport of cattle, with an established system of approval of livestock vessels: *Diseases of Animals (Carriage of Cattle by Sea Order, 1996)* of 24.1.1996, amended by Order of 15.9.1998.

5.2. Information received on competent authorities for animal welfare and animal identification

5.2.1. Central competent authority

The *Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry*, Dublin, is the central competent authority for animal welfare.

5.2.2. Regional/local competent authorities

27 *District Veterinary Offices*, grouped into 4 regions, act as the competent authorities in each county. Local Authorities, which are found in most counties and major cities, are, in the context of animal welfare, independent of the *Department of Agriculture and Food*. The Local Authorities do not implement Community animal welfare legislation, though they do have a role under certain national welfare legislation.

5.3. Main field findings

5.3.1. Means of transport by road used within Ireland

5.3.1.1. Many road vehicles, including car-trailers, seen during the visit, when used for transport within Ireland, showed one or more of the following features:

- no roofs,
- slippery surfaces on tailgate ramps and floors of compartments:
 - no battens/slats
 - worn out surfaces
 - surfaces wet with liquid excreta
- no tailgate ramps, so that animals had to jump out of the vehicle,
- protruding objects where animals may hurt themselves (nails; wooden splinters; rusty, sharp metal pieces),
- holes/depressions in floors, in floor-to-wall junctions, in walls where animals' feet may get trapped.

5.3.1.2. Most of the vehicles (including those for horses) were dirty or very dirty, often with dried faeces on the walls, when they were unloaded and loaded.

5.3.1.3. The officials (veterinary officers and agricultural officers) of the *District Veterinary Offices* met, reported that, when supervising the livestock markets, they had given verbal warnings to drivers of road vehicles if they had found facts

similar to those described under point 5.3.1.1. They also informed the visiting team that written warnings and sanctions would have been initiated only exceptionally.

- 5.3.1.4. Remarks: Keeping in mind the Irish legislation (see point 5.1.2.), the Commission veterinary experts were of the opinion that it was not necessary to differentiate, in each single case, between vehicles used for distances of less than 50 km and vehicles used for distances of more than 50 km, as foreseen by Article 1 of Directive 91/628/EEC.

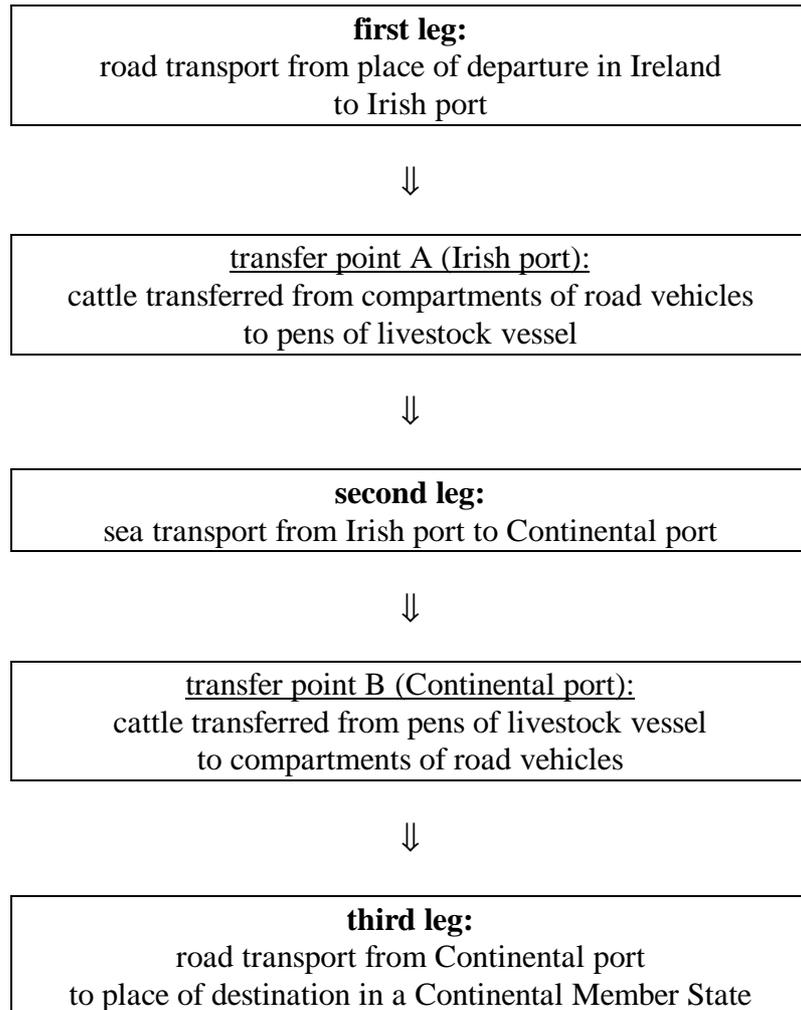
5.3.2. Conditions on markets

- 5.3.2.1. The covered livestock markets seen (all approved for intra-Community trade) showed cracked floors, rusty metal equipment, places where animals' feet could get trapped and/or other shortcomings, to varying degrees. The equipment for cleaning and disinfecting market halls, courtyards and road vehicles was without hot pressurised water and therefore in many cases inappropriate for cleaning the many rough surfaces of mobile and stationary facilities.

- 5.3.2.2. At the horse fair seen during the mission (also used for trade with Northern Ireland) in a public place in the centre of a city, there were no installations for unloading and loading horses, for tying and protecting them, for watering them, for cleaning and disinfection, for checking access, nor were there any signs of an established order, effective supervision or management of this traditional trade, the buying and selling being a congested conglomeration of horses, horse dealers, blacksmiths shoeing horses, fast-food dealers selling hamburgers from their stalls, scrap dealers, visitors, children and dogs, complicated by lorries and car trailers with horses being unloaded and loaded. Getting through this gathering was only possible because of the stoical steadiness of the mostly piebald horses and the calmness of the persons handling them.

5.3.3. Planning intra-Community road/sea/road transport of cattle using livestock vessels

- 5.3.3.1. As a major supplier of cattle to other countries, Ireland is using, among other schemes, the following three-stage scheme:



5.3.3.2. The route plans seen in an Irish port (transfer point A as described in point 5.3.3.1.) that was visited during the mission, did not include the first leg of the journey nor did they give any details (e.g. registration number) of the road vehicles to be used for the third leg of the journey. The veterinary authorities of the Irish port thus had no means to make sure that road vehicles fulfilling the additional requirements for transports exceeding eight hours were used, in particular not with regard to the third leg of the journey that often covered long distances (e.g. approx. 1.600 km from St. Malo to Murcia).

5.3.4. Transport by road vehicles leaving Ireland aboard ferries

5.3.4.1. In one case, a route plan for a consignment of cattle from Dunboyne (County Meath, Ireland) to Palermo (Sicily, Italy), via a roll-on-roll-off ferry from Ireland to France, was authorised by an Irish Veterinary Inspector, although the second rest period ("stop") planned on the Continent was for 12 hours only (instead of the required 24 hours). There was no indication in the route plan as to whether

animals would have to be unloaded during the two “stops” foreseen on the Continent.

- 5.3.4.2. Other route plans did not specify the identification (name) of the ferry or did not name the places of destination. Long “stops” of 20 hours were mentioned, where only 1-hour “stops” were indeed foreseen, in some cases. In several other cases, the places chosen for the required 12-hour rest periods after crossing the Atlantic Ocean by ferry (that took approximately 18 hours) were too far away from the French port of destination.
- 5.3.4.3. In general the route plans did not indicate whether animals would have to be unloaded during 12-hour rest periods after crossing the Atlantic Ocean.
- 5.3.4.4. Air space available around two road vehicles lashed on a ferry was not sufficient on all sides.
- 5.3.4.5. Lorries, seen on a ferry in an Irish port were not fitted with forced ventilation, although often used for long-distance transport to Mediterranean countries where temperatures above 30°C could easily occur in summer. The specific guidelines for international transport used by the District Veterinary Office, concentrated, in its chapter on “Ventilation”, on apertures, without mentioning the necessity for forced ventilation under certain circumstances.

5.3.5. Identification of sheep

The sheep seen during the mission at one of the livestock markets had neither ear tags nor tattoos of an official nature. At another market, where no sheep were seen during the visit, but where sheep were said to be traded on other days, the visiting team was informed that sheep would not have been identified by means of ear tags or identification marks of an official nature when arriving, in most cases; the officials declared that the origin of sheep could, however, often be established by means of colour marks (“flockbrands”).

6. NON-COMPLIANCES/DEFICIENCIES

- 6.1. In the field of animal welfare during transport, several requirements of Articles 3 and 5 of Directive 91/628/EEC (in particular, in connection with Section A of Chapter I and with Chapter VII of the Annex) were very often not met in Ireland (see points 5.3.1., 5.3.2.1., 5.3.2.2., 5.3.3., 5.3.4.).
- 6.2. The livestock markets seen were not in compliance with the requirements for assembly centres as laid down in Article 11 of Directive 64/432/EEC, with regard to “adequate housing”, surfaces that come in contact with animals, appropriate equipment for cleaning and disinfection (see point 5.3.2.1.). The

horse fair visited (also used for intra-Community trade) did not meet the even most basic requirements for an assembly centre (“marshalling centre”) as laid down in Article 7 of Directive 90/426/EEC (see point 5.3.2.2.).

- 6.3. The requirements of Directive 92/102/EC with regard to the identification of sheep were not at all respected (see point 5.3.5.).

7. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1. Handling of livestock and horses during transport within the country was of an acceptable standard overall. Apart from a few minor incidents, ill-treatment and transport of animals not fit for the intended journey were not observed. In general, the persons handling animals were quiet and expert with their animals and found ways to deal with even unusual situations. A considerable number of road vehicles used for carrying livestock within Ireland were, however, either inadequate or completely unsuitable to a great extent, some of them presenting hazards for the well-being of animals. The livestock markets were not of the required standard. When comparing the results in this particular field with the results of the Commission mission carried out in November 1995, no progress could be noted, nor were there any signs of effective initiatives having been taken by the central competent authority or by other competent authorities. Verbal warnings had obviously not contributed to an improvement of the road vehicles used.
- 7.2. Whereas Ireland has laid down and is applying strict legislation for sea transport aboard livestock vessels from Irish ports – legislation that goes far beyond the very basic requirements of the Community –, the Irish authorities found themselves faced with difficult tasks in cases where road vehicles unknown to the Irish authorities continued transport in Continental Member States after the transfer of animals from livestock vessels to trucks, in Continental ports. The route plans were often incomplete or incorrect. The Irish authorities could not say whether the vehicles used for road transport on the Continent complied with the requirements of Community legislation and whether all the other requirements were met.
- 7.3. Although no suffering of horses was observed, the facilities found at a horse fair in the open air were completely unacceptable.
- 7.4. While the bovine animals seen had identification marks, the Commission team came to the conclusion that a system of effective identification of sheep is not in place in Ireland. No progress could be noted in this field in relation to the previous Commission visit in November 1995, nor was there any sign of effective initiatives having been taken by the central competent authorities.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1. Recommendations for the Irish authorities

- 8.1.1. The Irish authorities should enforce Community and national legislation without delay, with regard to the deficient means of transport and the deficient livestock markets and horse fair (described in points 5.3.1. and 5.3.2.) by initiating a programme. The Commission services should be informed about such a programme by 31.10.1999, including deadlines for it.
- 8.1.2. A system of identification of sheep in compliance with Community requirements should be initiated in Ireland without delay to remedy the non-compliances described in point 5.3.5. The Commission services should be informed about measures to be taken by 31.10.1999, including deadlines for these measures.
- 8.1.3. Immediate action should be taken to remedy the deficiencies with regard to drawing up route plans (described in points 5.3.3. and 5.3.4.) – in co-operation with other Member States, if necessary. The Irish authorities should inform the Commission services about measures taken by 30.9.1999.

8.2. Recommendations for the Commission services

The Commission services should monitor the deadlines mentioned in point 8.1.

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