



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
Directorate F - Food and Veterinary Office

DG(SANCO)/9213/2003 – MR Final

FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION  
CARRIED OUT IN UNITED KINGDOM  
FROM 20 TO 29 OCTOBER 2003  
IN ORDER TO EVALUATE THE SYSTEM FOR CHECKS  
ON ANIMAL WELFARE DURING TRANSPORT  
AND AT THE TIME OF SLAUGHTER

*Please note that factual errors in the draft report have been corrected in bold, italic type.  
Clarifications provided by the UK Authorities are given as footnotes, in bold, italic type, to the  
relevant part of the report.*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
2.	OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION .....	1
3.	LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION.....	1
4.	BACKGROUND.....	2
5.	FINDINGS .....	2
	5.1. Follow-up of recommendations.....	2
	5.2. Supervision within slaughterhouses .....	6
6.	CONCLUSIONS .....	8
	6.1. Fitness of animals for transport .....	8
	6.2. Journey times and resting periods .....	8
	6.3. Checks on transport to slaughterhouses .....	9
	6.4. Supervision within slaughterhouses .....	9
	6.5. Overall conclusion.....	9
7.	CLOSING MEETING.....	9
8.	RECOMMENDATIONS .....	10
	To the competent authorities of United Kingdom.....	10
9.	ADDENDUM TO MISSION REPORT DG(SANCO)9213/2003 .....	11

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in United Kingdom from 20 to 29 October 2003. The mission team comprised two inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), and one Member State expert. The mission was undertaken as part of the FVO's planned mission programme. The inspection team was accompanied during the whole mission by a representative from the central competent authority (CCA), the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

An opening meeting was held on 20 October 2003 with the CCA and the Scottish competent authorities (CA). At this meeting, the objectives of the mission were confirmed by the inspection team, and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the mission requested. In addition, the inspection team selected the slaughterhouses that would be visited from a list provided by the CCA.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

The objectives of the mission were:

√ to evaluate the implementation of EU legislation concerning animal welfare during transport and at slaughter, as set out in:

- Council Directive 91/628/EEC<sup>(1)</sup> of 19 November 1991 on the protection of animals during transport and amending Directives 90/425/EEC and 91/496/EEC, as amended,
- Council Directive 93/119/EC<sup>(2)</sup> of 22 December 1993 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing, and

√ to follow-up on a mission concerning animal transport carried out in February 2001.

In pursuit of these objectives, meetings were held with/the following sites were visited:

VISITS			Comments
Competent authority	Central	1	Opening meeting with the CCA was incorporated in the regional meeting in Scotland.
	Regional	3	Meetings with the competent authorities in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.
Port		1	The FVO inspection team visited a livestock vessel and the lairages at a Scottish port, where sheep and cattle from the Islands are unloaded following transportation.
Markets		2	Markets for cattle and sheep, one in N.Ireland and one in Wales. The one in Wales, approved as an assembly centre for export, used only as a market during 2003.
Slaughterhouses		6	Two sheep slaughterhouses; two slaughterhouses for cattle, both using electrical stunning; one pig slaughterhouse with CO <sub>2</sub> stunning, and one poultry slaughterhouse.

## 3. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION

The mission was carried out under the general provisions of Community legislation and, in particular:

- Art. 10 of Council Directive 91/628/EEC;

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<sup>(1)</sup>OJ L 340 of 11.12.1991, p.17

<sup>(2)</sup>OJ L 340 of 31.12.1993, p.21

- Art. 14 of Council Directive 93/119/EEC;
- Commission Decision 98/139/EC<sup>(3)</sup>. of 4 February 1998 laying down certain detailed rules concerning on-the-spot checks carried out in the veterinary field by Commission experts in the Member States

#### 4. BACKGROUND

A previous mission on animal welfare during transport was carried out in the United Kingdom in 2001. The report of that mission is available on the DG (Health and Consumer Protection) Internet site, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg24/> under reference DG(SANCO)/3245/2001-MR-Final (hereafter: report 3245/2001).

In its overall conclusion, this report stated that the controls operated by the UK, with a few exceptions, ensured that the requirements of Council Directive 91/628/EEC (as amended) were met. It also stated that some procedures developed were an example of best practice. A few shortcomings noted were addressed in the recommendations.

Animal welfare at slaughter was evaluated within the context of missions on public health issues, in particular DG(SANCO)/1414/1998, 1179/2000 and 1196/2000.

The CCA and the devolved administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are described in report 3245/2001. In 2002 the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) changed its name to Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). A more detailed description of Northern Ireland CA is provided in report DG(SANCO)/3340/2001. Further detailed information is available from the following web-sites:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk>

<http://www.dardni.gov.uk/vetservice/index.htm>

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiagriculture/index.htm>

#### 5. FINDINGS

##### 5.1. Follow-up of recommendations

###### 5.1.1. *Fitness of animals for transport*

Report 3245/2001 recommended that:

- “ *the targeting of checks of consignments (as required by Article 8 of Council Directive 91/628/EEC, as amended), in particular those destined for intra-community trade, should be reviewed, so that the maximum use is made of the available resources to ensure the fitness of animals for transport (article 1(b) of Council Directive 91/628/EEC, as amended)*”.

In response, the CCA indicated that:

- An official veterinarian inspects all animals before a journey for export starts in order to check their fitness for travel as required by Commission Decision 2001/298/EC<sup>4</sup> regarding health and welfare certification.

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<sup>3</sup> Commission Decision 98/139/EC, OJ L 38 of 12.2.1998, p.10

<sup>4</sup> Commission Decision 2001/298/EC of 30.03.2003, OJ L 102 of 12.04.2001, p. 63

- Exports in 2003 are much reduced from previous levels and checks are risk-based.
- When export of sheep for fattening and slaughter re-started in July 2002 after FMD crisis, considerable effort was put into inspecting consignments at the time of loading and when they were transferred from vehicles to the livestock vessel that had replaced the previous roll-on roll-off vessel.

The inspection team noted that:

- Regarding checks at assembly centres, in Wales the local veterinary inspectors (LVIs) had taken appropriate actions regarding animals rejected as unfit for export (an average of 20 to 40 animals per week during the past export season, mostly for mild lameness).
- Animals that cannot be transported are killed on farm, while those slightly injured or lame can be transported only under certain conditions. The OV's at the slaughterhouses had taken appropriate actions when such provisions had not been met.

#### 5.1.2. *Journey times and resting periods*

Report 3245/2001 recommended:

- *“Take measures to ensure that in certifying the place of departure (as defined by article 2(e) of Council Directive 91/628/EEC as amended), LVIs have assured themselves that animals have been provided with a 24 hour rest period.”*

In response, the CCA indicated that:

- A reminder on this requirement was included in an advisory leaflet sent in August 2002 to all livestock farmers.
- Current EU measures regarding FMD impose residency and standstill of the animals in excess of 24 hours except for those moving directly to slaughter.

As the two assembly centres in Wales were only operating as local markets and intra-community trade has not resumed to the levels prior to FMD in 2001, the action taken in response could not be evaluated. The continued standstill applying to animals not going for slaughter may explain why there has not yet been any enhancement of the system of surveillance or instruction to LVIs on this issue.

- *“A system should be developed to monitor that the maximum journey time of 8 hours on board of basic vehicles is respected (point 2 of Chapter VII of Council Directive 91/628/EEC as amended), in particular when the journey involves time at a market.”*

The CCA indicated, in their response, that:

- It was not possible to provide animals moving through markets, where they are re-grouped, with a document specifying individual journey times.
- Provided the market premises give access to water the time in markets is accepted as equivalent to a mid journey rest.

- Compliance is monitored by checks on Animal Transport Certificates (ATC) that must show the place and time of loading and departure.

At the markets visited, the inspection team noted that:

- The time of loading, departure and unloading was not always entered on the ATC. No action had been taken in such cases.
- A different document is used for each leg of a multiple-leg journey. Lack of accompanying documentation does not allow the CA to check the place date and time of departure and does not meet the requirement of Article 4 of Council Directive 91/628/EEC. It was possible to match such documentation through the market register, but the CA did not carry out routine checks of these documents to monitor journey times.
- No water was available for the animals in either market visited, except for those few heads accommodated during the night, when feed would also be provided. The average time spent by the animals in the market in Wales was 6-7 hours. They mostly originated in farms less than 50 km away and places of destination were mainly at 3-5 hours distance. At the market in Northern Ireland, although the distances to and from the market were short, most cattle were staying for 7-9 hours and some up to 11 hours.
- Consignments of sheep are also transported each week from premises in Northern Ireland to a market in England. Some consignments from this market had a final destination at a slaughterhouse in Wales.

The inspection team visited a Scottish port, where consignments of cattle and sheep had arrived from the offshore islands on a walk-on walk-off vessel or in special movable pens (“General Livestock Trailers” or GLTs) which were loaded onto a roll-on roll-off ferry. The multiple leg journey for these animals takes a minimum of 24 hours from the farm of origin to the final destination and involves:

- (1) A journey of up to 3 hours for animals coming from the smaller islands to the island market.
- (2) Assembling at the market, arriving early afternoon and leaving in the evening.
- (3) Loading either onto GLTs or on walk-on walk-off vessel. This may start 3-5 hours before departure.
- (4) 10 or 14 hour sea crossing. The CCA considers this as “neutral journey time”, provided that facilities are at least as high as those required for higher standard vehicles.
- (5) Up to eight hours in the lairage at the mainland port.
- (6) Transport either to another market or to a slaughterhouse, mostly in Scotland.
- (7) For those animals brought to a market, the transport to the farm of final destination, up to 5-6 hours away.

It was noted that:

- As for markets, animals were accompanied during each leg of the journey by a different ATC. In September 2003, the CA highlighted in a letter to the company responsible for the sea transport that the documents had not been completed with the loading and sailing times. Documents seen by the inspection team indicated that this was still not always complied with.
- Each GLT compartment of 15-25 sheep was provided with 10-lt. water for the journey. The buckets were not easily reachable by most of the sheep because of the high stocking density *in most GLTs*. Previously the CA had requested the manager of the shipping company for remedial action on the lack of water. In particular, from the first loading to the last unloading, cattle and sheep had been kept on the GLTs for 21-22 hours, without being watered and fed, and without having the possibility to lie down because of the excessive loading densities.
- In the pens of the lairage both sheep and cattle were so densely packed that they could not *easily* access the water dispensers. The animals were in the pens at least three and a half hours after their arrival. At least one consignment of cattle spent more than 8 hours at the lairages at the docks.
- No feeding had been provided during the sea journey for either the walk-on walk-off vessel or the GLTs or at the port lairages. The CA had previously highlighted the lack of feeding during this leg of the journey, but this deficiency persisted.<sup>5</sup>

#### 5.1.3. Checks on transport to slaughterhouses

Report 3245/2001 recommended:

- *“Take measures to ensure stricter monitoring by the Meat Hygiene Service of the reporting of incidents at slaughterhouses to both the SVS and local authorities as laid down in their operational manual. The SVS and local authorities should ensure that appropriate follow-up action is taken following such incidents, in particular to enforce Article 3(b) of Council Directive 91/628/EEC, as amended.”*

In response, the CCA indicated that:

- In Great Britain, a framework agreement has been drawn up between local authorities, DEFRA and the Welsh Assembly Government, for the delivery of services in animal health and welfare, which will be implemented from 4 April 2004. This agreement with local authorities, who are the primary enforcing agents for this legislation, includes monitoring enforcement activity in abattoirs and follow up action.
- In Northern Ireland, controls in slaughterhouses are performed directly by the veterinary service of the Department of Agriculture. A central enforcement team is in charge for the prosecution of offenders.

The inspection team noted that:

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<sup>5</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the UK authorities indicated that no feeding was provided because this class of sheep lacks experience of anything other than fresh grass.*

- Appropriate action had been taken following the incidents involving breaches of animal welfare rules.
- Checks on transport to slaughterhouses were focused on the animals rather than the vehicles and the transport conditions.

Report 3245/2001 recommended:

- *“Take measures to ensure that the stocking density for poultry during transport is respected as laid down in part E of Chapter VI of the Annex of Council Directive 91/628/EEC, as amended”.*

In response, the CCA indicated that:

- the welfare of poultry during transport is monitored by the Official Veterinary Surgeon at the slaughterhouse taking account of the season, weather conditions and type of birds. Stocking density is determined not by the size transport crates but by the number of birds in each crate and this may be adjusted in accordance with these criteria.

The inspection team noted that:

- Although UK legislation<sup>6</sup> does not include stocking densities as laid down in Chapter VI of the Annex to Council Directive 91/628/EEC, transporters have to take them into account when deciding whether or not the space available is adequate<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, the CA needs to demonstrate “unnecessary suffering” of the animals, if sanctions are to be imposed because the space available is insufficient<sup>8</sup>.
- The stocking density of the poultry transported to the slaughterhouse visited was in compliance with the requirements set out in Chapter VI(E) of the Annex to Council Directive 91/628/EEC, as amended.
- In *one* slaughterhouse *in Scotland* for other species, stocking density *in one vehicle* was exceeding up to 30% above the maximum limit.

## 5.2. Supervision within slaughterhouses

### 5.2.1. Animal handling and facilities

Supervision of movement and lairaging of animals within slaughterhouses was generally adequate. However, it was noted that:

- In one of the two sheep slaughterhouses handling of the animals was sometimes rough (points 2 and 3 of Chapter II, Annex A to Council Directive 93/119/EC).

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<sup>6</sup> Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 1997, as amended

<sup>7</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the UK Authorities noted that UK legislation include a reference to stocking densities in Article 5 of the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 1997 and similar legislation in Northern Ireland. In addition the UK Authorities noted that the provisions of Chapter VI of the Annex to Directive 91/628/EEC are not worded in a way that can be readily transposed into UK law.*

<sup>8</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the UK Authorities noted that a prosecution would normally only be taken if the welfare of animals was compromised. Action could however be taken if a technical breach occurred without animal welfare being compromised e.g. stocking densities above defined level.*

- At the poultry slaughterhouse there were lorries waiting for the unloading of the live birds in the courtyard. The OV stated that they might wait up to 6 hours, and seldom 12 hours, before the modules are unloaded in the covered lairages. Apart from some remarks about adverse weather conditions no steps had been taken to reduce delays, which does not fully respect the provisions of Chapter I(2) of Annex A to Council Directive 93/119/EC<sup>9</sup>.

### 5.2.2. *Stunning*

Effective stunning was ensured in three out of the six slaughterhouses visited<sup>10</sup>. The mission team noted that:

- Both sheep slaughterhouses were performing *halal* slaughter with prior electrical stunning. In the Welsh abattoir the applied current with the head-to-back stunner was in some cases lower than 0.8 to 1 A. The duration of its application (1 to 4 seconds) was irregular due to the shortness of the space available with respect to the speed of the chain. When a head-only stunner was used for horned and non-horned sheep, the fleece was not wetted and the electrodes were not always correctly applied. The strong smell of burnt wool indicated high resistance. Although bleeding was rapidly performed, these animals showed spontaneous positive corneal and blinking reflexes, breathing action of the chest, breathing noises through the cut trachea and intense and persistent kicking activity during bleeding.
- In the sheep slaughterhouse in Scotland where the same procedure with the so-called head-to-back stunner was used, stunning was satisfactory.
- In both abattoirs killing cattle, animals were stunned with a head-to body stun-kill system, with variable effectiveness in the result. In the abattoir in Scotland 8 out of 20 observed animals showed breathing activity, rigid tonus of body, tail and extremities and movement of the head to different degrees, before and during the bleeding procedure<sup>11</sup>. One animal was shot with the captive bolt pistol as a back up following ineffective stunning. However, the device was not immediately available as it was kept at the stunning point and not at the place of slaughter, as required by Article 6(2) of Council Directive 93/119/EC.

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<sup>9</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the UK Authorities noted that the figures quoted by the OV were maximum figures and that normally they were much less. Provision of shelter from wind, rain and sun are routinely provided if necessary. The catching plan on farm is designed to minimise lairage-waiting time which is usually 2-3 hours.*

<sup>10</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the UK Authorities noted that British researchers had different views on the signs of electrical stunning and killing of cattle. See Wotton et al.(2000). Electrical stunning of cattle. The Veterinary Record. 147,681-684.*

<sup>11</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the UK Authorities noted that no rhythmic breathing was observed which is generally accepted as the most significant sign of returning consciousness in electrically stunned animals and that the other signs indicated in the report do not necessarily represent signs of ineffective stunning. In addition the UK Authorities noted that the abattoir subsequently commissioned a report from a specialised research scientist to verify the operation of the stunner. The report concludes that this stunner was operated and monitored very effectively and maintained a high level of animal welfare.*

- At the abattoir in Northern Ireland, the CA had consulted an expert from the stunning equipment company in order to improve its performance. Then the personnel had been instructed by the OV to shoot animals before shackling in any doubtful case. 4 out of 12 animals showed signs of breathing activity, movements of head and extremities exceeding normal tonic clonic activities and positive corneal reflexes and were shot<sup>12</sup>.
- Stunning of poultry was ineffective with most birds demonstrating signs such as positive eye reflexes and wing flapping before decapitation. Checklists indicated that the CA carried out checks as required by Article 6 of Council Directive 93/119/EC but had not detected this problem<sup>13</sup>.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1. Fitness of animals for transport

- (1) As regards the recommendation in the previous report, the CA's system of surveillance on fitness of animals for transport was seen to be effective and enforcement action was taken when necessary.

### 6.2. Journey times and resting periods

- (1) With regard to the recommendation made in previous report, a system for monitoring journey times through markets has not been implemented.
- (2) The current system in place for documents accompanying animals does not enable the CAs to monitor the actual travelling time as required by Article 4 of Council Directive 91/628/EEC (as amended). In particular, this results in journey involving several legs sometimes exceeding maximum journey times, but going undetected.
- (3) Although the time spent at markets could be included in the eight hours travel time allowed by EU rules, for a certain number of animals this total time limit would be exceeded. The CA instruction that time at market could be considered as a mid-journey rest is not always valid, as water is frequently not available to the animals. Equally in such cases the market/assembly centre can not be considered as place of departure (Article 2(e) of Council Directive 91/628/EEC, as amended).
- (4) The provisions for adequate watering, feeding and resting the animals were not fully respected for the sea journeys from Scottish islands (point 24 of Chapter I (D) and points 2, 3, 4 and 7 of Chapter VII of the Annex to Council Directive 91/628/EEC, as amended). Although the CA detected the deficiency concerning excessive time without water, the follow-up action taken was not effective.

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<sup>12</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the UK Authorities dispute the inspection team findings and conclusions on this point.*

<sup>13</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the UK Authorities dispute the inspection team findings and conclusions on this point.*

### 6.3. Checks on transport to slaughterhouses

- (1) As regards recommendations on stricter monitoring at slaughterhouses, actions taken and reporting were adequate, but were still focused more on animals than transport conditions.
- (2) *The MHS OVSs are not enforcement officers for WATO 1997 but they provide information on non-compliance to the Local Authority who are the primary enforcement inspectors for this legislation. However, there is not sufficient* legal power to ensure the minimum space allowances as set in Chapter VI of the Annex to Council Directive 91/628/EEC (as amended). Consequently, checks made at slaughterhouses are focused on detecting animal suffering and there is less emphasis on surveillance of other EU requirements.

### 6.4. Supervision within slaughterhouses

This issue was not evaluated on the previous mission.

- (1) Incidents of inappropriate handling of animals or delays before entering the lairage were not always identified as a problem.
- (2) *Potential difficulties with* effective stunning of sheep in Wales arose because the throughput of the slaughterhouse was not compatible with the stunning arrangements in place<sup>14</sup>.
- (3) Regarding electrical stunning of cattle, *more procedures had been adopted* in Northern Ireland, *as compared to* Scotland, *to ensure effectiveness of the result*.
- (4) Regarding electrical stunning of poultry, although checks were carried out, problems with ineffective stunning were not detected.

### 6.5. Overall conclusion

Concerning transport, while overall level of implementation is adequate, the CCA have made little progress on implementation of the recommendations in report 3245/2001. Regarding animal welfare at slaughter, although surveillance *was* carried out *and generally adequate, some further assessment of certain technical aspects may be necessary*.

## 7. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 29 October 2003 with the central competent authority, UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and representatives from Scotland and Northern Ireland regional competent authorities. At this meeting, the main findings and conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team.

The representatives of the CCA *noted* the findings and the conclusions presented. With respect to the recommendation regarding the documentation accompanying animals, they indicated that the present system would not be changed because of the administrative burden involved, particularly when animals are re-grouped in markets.

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<sup>14</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the UK Authorities dispute the inspection team findings and conclusions on this point and the following points (3) and (4).*

The CCA did not fully agree with the conclusions regarding the ineffective electrical stunning of animals.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **To the competent authorities of United Kingdom**

The CCA is requested to inform the Commission services of the actions taken and planned to address the following recommendations and to provide a timetable for the completion of these actions. This should be done within one month of the receipt of the final mission report.

The CCA should ensure that:

- (1) A system is developed to enable the CAs to monitor the actual travelling time of the animals as required by Article 4 of Council Directive 91/628/EEC as amended, when a journey involves several legs or time at a market.
- (2) The provisions for adequate watering, feeding and resting the animals are fully respected for the sea journeys from Scottish islands (point 24 of Chapter I (D) and points 2, 3, 4 and 7 of Chapter VII of the Annex to Council Directive 91/628/EEC, as amended), and at markets where necessary (Article 2(e) of Council Directive 91/628/EEC, as amended).
- (3) The minimum space allowances for the transported animals as laid down in Chapter VI of the Annex to Council Directive 91/628/EEC, as amended, are respected.
- (4) Deficiencies identified in the slaughterhouses are addressed. Regarding the electrical stunning of cattle, a further study of the effectiveness of this system should be performed to ensure the requirements of Article 6(1) of Council Directive 93/119/EC are respected.

## **9. ADDENDUM TO MISSION REPORT DG(SANCO)9213/2003**

The CA provided the following initial reaction to the recommendations in the draft report:

- 9.1. In relation to recommendation 1, the CCA pointed out that arrangements are already in place in the UK to monitor journeys of several legs. Implementation measures introduced by the UK provide for the journey into the market and the journey from the market to be treated as separate “legs” of the journey. Neither “leg” of the journey may exceed half of the maximum permitted journey time for the type of vehicle and species transported. In all cases the animals must be accompanied by the appropriate documentation.
- 9.2. In relation to recommendation 2, the CCA pointed out that action was already in progress to ensure that these provisions were fully complied with accepting the limitation that some classes of sheep involved will not accept hard food.
- 9.3. In relation to recommendation 3, the CCA noted that as the provisions of Chapter VI of the Annex to Directive 91/628/EEC are not worded in a way that can be readily transposed into UK law, they are primarily advisory. UK law contains a general provision requiring transporters to have regard to the space allowances set out in Chapter VI to the Annex and to consider the other factors referred to in Chapter VI. Furthermore the stocking densities are set out for transporters in the Guidance on the Welfare of (Transport) Order (1997) Published in May 1998. Nevertheless, the CCA will remind staff at slaughterhouses of arrangements for checking during unloading and in relation to inappropriate handling of animals.
- 9.4. In relation to recommendation 4, the CCA disputed the basis of this recommendation. It noted, however, the particular concern in relation to electrical stunning and killing of cattle and will ensure that these slaughterhouses are subject to checks so as to ensure high standards of the welfare of the cattle.