



### Questions and Answers on Animal Welfare in transport

Brussels, 7 December 2023

#### Why is the Commission proposing new rules on the welfare of animals in transport?

The EU's legislation on animal transport dates back almost 50 years and the last major overhaul was done in 2004, this is almost 20 years ago. Today's proposal for a much-needed revision is part of the EU's [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) for sustainable agriculture and food production and builds further on the latest scientific insights and technological developments.

Improving animal welfare first and foremost benefits the animals themselves, but also consumers and farmers. It improves food quality, enhances consumer confidence, and lowers costs caused by injury, disease, and veterinary medicines. It also helps to address risks to human health, such as animal-to-human disease transmission and antimicrobial resistance.

#### Why is the welfare of animals in transport important?

Every year, **1,6 billion animals are transported** in the EU, mainly by road. For ethical reasons, it is of utmost importance to ensure the proper welfare of these animals, but other reasons play a part as well:

- Better animal welfare means **better animal health** and better-quality food. It contributes to sustainable food systems.
- Ensuring good animal welfare helps to **avert risks to public health**, such as anti-microbial resistance and zoonotic diseases.
- Improving animal welfare responds to a clear societal demand with EU citizens calling for higher levels of animal welfare in the EU. A recent [Eurobarometer](#) showed that **83%** of those surveyed **wanted increased protection** for animals in transport. This request echoes at the highest political levels, with both the Council and European Parliament calling for improved welfare standards for animals in transport.

#### What are the main elements of the proposal?

The proposal focusses on four essential elements for better welfare of animals in transport:

- *Limited journey times and more rest breaks*

**Animals meant for slaughter** have a maximum journey time of 9 hours, while currently there is no limit in the duration of the journey to a slaughterhouse (only a requirement to rest for 24 hours in a control post after 24 to 29 hours of journey, depending on the species).

For **other animals**, the maximum journey time is 21 hours, which must include at least 1 hour rest after 10 hours. After this journey, the animals must be given 24 hours of rest outside the vehicle before the continuation of the journey. During rest, the animals must be fed and given water. After the 24h rest period, animals can be transported for one more stage of 21h (including a 1h rest after 10 hours), after which they must reach the final destination.

This new approach of having limited journey times is coherent with the drivers' social rights legislation and thus easier to implement.

- *Increased space allowances*

The proposal significantly improves space allowances compared to the existing legislation. The proposal identifies the minimum space that each animal must have, according to weight and species. These minimal standards follow the EFSA recommendations and are important to **allow animals to safely adjust their position and rest** during the journey.

- *Enhanced conditions for exports to non-EU countries*

The proposal includes a series of new requirements to ensure that EU's updated rules to protect animals during transport will be effectively applied also for export, until destination in the non-EU

country. This includes stricter rules for the transport of animals by sea (higher maritime safety standards for the vessels and animal welfare trained staff on board) as well as a new independent audit and certification system for export of animals both by road and by sea.

- *Temperature limits during transport*

The proposal protects animals from extreme temperatures (both hot and cold).

If temperatures are expected to be between 25°C and 30°C, journeys must be limited to a maximum 9 hours. When day temperatures are above 30°C, transport of animals will only be permitted at night. When the night temperature forecast is above 30°C, animals will be given more space to prevent heat stress.

At the same time, when the temperature is expected to be below 0°C, road vehicles have to be covered and the animals must be protected from exposure to windchill. Below -5°C, in addition to the above measures, the journey time shall not exceed 9 hours.

Special provisions are included for **vulnerable animals**, such as pregnant animals, hens at the end of the production cycle and unweaned calves. There are also separate provisions for cats and dogs kept by breeders, sellers, pet-shops and shelters, including minimum ages for transport and additional veterinary health checks, as well as new and more specific requirements for the transport aquatic animals.

### **Why does this proposal only cover certain animals?**

The proposal covers the vast majority of the 1.6 billion animals transported between EU Member States each year - mostly farm animals: pigs, cows, goats, sheep, poultry, rabbits and horses.

For the first time, the proposal includes specific provisions for the transport of **aquatic animals** in the context of an economic activity.

The proposal also expands and reinforces the rules for the transport of cats and dogs for commercial purposes.

Finally, separate animal welfare legislation already exists to protect animals used for scientific purposes, and animals kept in zoos and aquariums.

### **Will the proposed measures have a financial impact for business operators?**

Production cost for food of animal origin is expected to only increase marginally.

Nevertheless, as there will be costs in adjusting to the new rules – transporters may have to invest in new or renovated vehicles and vessels, the Commission has proposed sufficiently **long transition periods** for the new rules.

However, there will also be **clear gains** for operators involved in the transport of animals. For example, the **digitalisation** of much of the administrative process will reduce costs for transporters, and reduce enforcement costs for public authorities. In addition, shorter journey times will encourage **shorter supply chains** and thus incentivise the local economy.

Given that almost 99% of the 1,3 million companies in the transportation and storage sector are **SMEs**, the Commission has been particularly sensitive to their concerns. It designed the proposals taking into account their needs, building further on the outcome of the extensive consultations during the preparation process.

### **How much time will business operators have to adapt to the new measures?**

Under the proposed rules, business operators will have **5 years to adapt** to some of the new measures that require longer term planning and investments. Some transport companies will need to alter and **invest in their trucks** to provide more space per animal. Those sea transporters who currently do not follow the required standards of maritime safety for the animals, will have to **renovate vessels**.

In any case, all actors involved in the transport of animals will benefit from clearer harmonized rules for all species and categories of animals. They will also see a clear reduction in administrative burden due to digitalisation.

### **Is the Commission's proposal based on scientific evidence?**

Yes. The **European Food Safety Authority** (EFSA) has published [5 scientific opinions](#) and, animal by animal, made recommendations to improve their wellbeing during transport. The opinions were on equids, bovines, small ruminants, pigs, domestic birds and rabbits. Today's proposal also draws on the **international standards** adopted by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and

discussions within the EU's Animal Welfare Platform and its subgroup dedicated to the protection of animals during transport.

An evaluation of the existing legislation by the Commission confirmed that the current legislation was no longer fit for purpose, that it was difficult to implement and enforce across the EU, and that it did not reflect the latest science and technology. Parts of the current Regulation is based on scientific evidence from the 1990's. On two occasions (2018 and 2023), the **European Court of Auditors** identified similar weaknesses in the legislation, while the **European Parliament** also issued recommendations for updated rules.

The Commission also carried out a robust and comprehensive **impact assessment** and extensive consultations, which helped shape the final proposal.

### **Will the proposed rules apply to animals exported from the EU and are there any rules for imports?**

For **exports from the EU**, operators must ensure that EU rules for the protection of animals in transport are respected until they arrive at their destination in the third countries. This was confirmed by the European Court of Justice in 2015.

To enforce this in practice, the proposal requires the transport operators to be certified. Livestock vessels also have to, among other things, fly a white or grey flag under maritime safety rules. Animals may only be loaded to these vessels if the ship risk profile is identified as low risk or standard risk according to the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State control. Vessels also need to have an animal welfare officer on board during sea journeys, in addition to previous rules that already demand a veterinarian on board for the first journey of any vessel approved to transport livestock, as well as before every re-approval (i.e. every 5 years).

Today's proposal also includes requirements for animals **imported into the EU** from third countries. The same or equivalent standards apply to imported animals, from their starting point in the non-EU country to the final destination in the EU.

### **How can digitalisation improve the welfare of animals in transport?**

In line with the EU's digital agenda, and to facilitate the implementation and enforcement of the legislation, we can make better use of modern technologies. For example, **positioning systems** will allow better targeted and more efficient controls by the authorities, with the help of a central EU database. This will not only improve animal welfare but also create a level playing field for operators involved in the transportation of animals. Digitalisation will also reduce the use of paper and substantially **reduce red tape** for business operators.

The Commission's proposal will also facilitate a **harmonised level of enforcement and compliance**, as it updates rules on the welfare of animals during transport in accordance with the latest scientific and technological progress. TRACES would be further developed to address all certifications, authorisations and approvals electronically, allowing all competent authorities in the EU to access the relevant data for the transport of animals. In addition, live tracking of road vehicles will be available in TRACES to better monitor that journey times are respected.

### **Can Member States apply stricter rules than the proposed EU rules?**

Yes. However, to avoid significant divergence in national rules, which could disrupt the Single Market, Member States can only apply stricter rules in specific areas and under certain conditions. Member States can go beyond the EU minimum standards for transport taking place entirely on their own territory or for direct exports from their own Member State to a non-EU country.

### **How will the proposed measures be enforced?**

Indicator-based data will be collected from operators and national authorities through the **TRACES database**. An important innovation is that this database will be used to better monitor the welfare of the animals. This will enable authorities to better target their inspections and controls of animals in transport. Based on this data, the Commission will publish monitoring reports on the state of animal welfare in transport every 5 years. This will also be useful to evaluate whether the EU measures need to be adjusted further.

### **Does the Commission plan to propose any other animal welfare initiatives?**

A new, and first time ever, proposal on the welfare of dogs and cats has been adopted today, together with the welfare in transport proposal. The Commission also continues to work on other areas of animal welfare, including welfare at slaughter, welfare on the farm and animal welfare labelling. However, more time is needed to assess the impact of such proposals.

In relation to cage-free farming, the Commission is now carefully assessing important aspects related to the transition to cage-free farming to ensure that it is sustainable for the agricultural sector and for our food systems. The preliminary results of the ongoing impact assessment show that the transition to cage-free systems demands the adaptation of several farming parameters, such as enriching the environment of the animals, and providing them with more space, to secure improved welfare conditions for the animals. Further consultations are needed concerning the costs, the appropriate length of the transitional period and the relevant measures at import. To ensure a proper balance between animal welfare and socio-economic impacts, the phasing out of cages has to come with other animal welfare measures at farm level.

Preparatory work will therefore continue, including in the context of the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the EU, expected to take place in January 2024, which President Von der Leyen announced in her 2023 State of the Union speech, and which will also look at the issue of animal welfare and gather views from those responsible for ensuring animals' wellbeing.

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