



Live animal exports: the case for prohibition

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Key facts...

- ★ The RSPCA would like to see the live export of animals for slaughter and/or further fattening prohibited.
- ★ Evidence suggests that live transport can cause animals to suffer. Animals have often been loaded onto trucks for hours of travel on UK roads before facing a channel crossing of up to another six hours and then heading for destination farms, where in some cases the conditions could be illegal in the UK, specifically in relation to calves.
- ★ The RSPCA believes that Britain's exit from the European Union presents the Government the opportunity to introduce its own rules on animal transport and prohibit live animal exports, as long as any such rules are compliant with World Trade Organisation rules.

Introduction

Current UK rules on the live export of animals, which predominantly affect farm animals, currently come from the EU's body of animal welfare law. These were agreed in 2005¹ and implemented in England by the [Welfare of Animals \(Transport\) \(England\) Order 2006](#) which lays down general conditions for the transport of animals. The order specifies that animals should not be transported so that they are caused injury or suffering, and gives specific rules on journey times for animals and the authorisation process for transporters, vehicles and ships.

Journey times vary according to different species. Whilst there is an eight hour maximum journey time, this can be extended if the vehicle meets a number of additional standards such as ventilation systems maintaining a range of temperatures from 5°C to 30°C, a navigation system to record the journey times, and appropriate bedding and food. In practice, maximum journey times vary from 19 hours for calves to 24 hours for horses and pigs. Sheep can be transported for 14 hours, followed by a minimum one hour rest and then travel onward for a minimum of another fourteen hours.

However, now that the UK is leaving the EU the Government, who have previously indicated that they could not go any further than the existing EU rules, has the opportunity to develop its own rules for animal transport. Whilst these rules must be World Trade Organisation (WTO) compliant (ie not seen as a barrier to trade), the RSPCA believes this presents the Government with an opportunity to prohibit live animal exports and, whilst the trade continues, significantly improve conditions for the animals involved.

What are the RSPCA's concerns with current system?

1. Inspections

We would like to see all lorries going abroad inspected at the port of departure, as well as at the time of loading. Evidence shows that this is not currently the case. We are concerned that unless every vehicle is inspected at the port of departure, despite having undergone supervised loading, welfare problems will go unseen, which in our view is unacceptable.

2. The conditions used to transport the animals over long distances

¹ Regulation 1/2005/EC

Vessels used for sea travel must be fit for purpose in order to avoid compromising the welfare of the animals during the journey. Recent history has shown that this is not always the case.

3. The unloading facilities required at ports

Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 states that in the case of emergencies (Article 23) the animals should be able to be transferred to another means of transport, returned to their place of departure or be unloaded and held in suitable accommodation. The RSPCA has completed the inspection of a number of ports, for example Ramsgate, where there are neither sufficient handling facilities or accommodation which could house the animals should an emergency occur, as required under the legislation. Despite this, animals are still allowed to depart from this port to the continent on a fairly regular basis, despite the serious welfare problems which occurred with some sheep in the recent past.

5. Ports being unable to choose

The RSPCA believes that if the port owners do not want the trade going through their port because they do not have the facilities or there is public demand for the trade to stop, they should be allowed to stop the trade. At present, primarily due to EU legislation, this is not possible.

The impact of Brexit

Brexit presents the UK with an opportunity to introduce its own rules on animal transport which could prohibit live animal exports, providing of course these rules are WTO compliant (ie they would have to not give an advantage to home production, treat all countries the same, not be a disguised restriction on trade, be flexible and necessary).

However, we recognise that developing these rules may not be an easy or quick undertaking and, whilst the trade continues, we believe that the following improvements can and should be made:

- Specifications around maximum journey times, on-board conditions and space should be reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect best knowledge of the needs of different species, ages and classes of animal.
- A maximum journey time needs to be set; the RSPCA proposes species-specific maximum times in line with those set out in the RSPCA welfare standards for farm animals², already applied in practice through RSPCA Assured and by others.
- The criteria relating to what constitutes a suitable 'rest stop' for animals on long journeys should be reviewed to ensure they provide animal with the opportunity to rest undisturbed in a low stress environment.
- Enforcement processes, and the resources allocated to this area, should be reviewed with a view to ensuring they are fit for purpose and provide robust protection to animals in transit.
- As the replacement for the Common Agricultural Policy is developed, the Government should ensure that no farm support payments are given for live animals exported for slaughter.

For more information about the opportunities for improving farm animal welfare that Brexit may offer the UK, please see our detailed briefings available on our website: <http://politicalanimal.org.uk/england/brexit/>

² RSPCA Welfare Standards are available online: <https://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/farmanimals/standards/> (accessed 16/06/17).