

# Better protecting farm animals during live transportation

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## Policy Context

Live animal transportation is associated with many welfare concerns including distress, injuries and prolonged hunger and thirst. While the EU is in the process of updating its animal transport regulatory framework, the UK only published a series of propositions in 2021 that have not been translated into laws (with the exception of a recent ban in live exportation for slaughter), leaving important gaps in protection unaddressed. This highlights the urgent need for policymakers to implement more comprehensive animal welfare laws to maintain the UK's leadership in animal welfare standards.

## Research summary

During transportation, animals are typically deprived of food, water and rest for extended period. Factors such as fitness for transport, journey length, climate, and space can all further negatively impact animal welfare.

Although the UK and other jurisdictions adopted regulations to protect animals during transit, reports of [significant failures](#) show farm animals are not adequately safeguarded. While [the British public](#) is largely in favour of new laws to improve animal welfare, live animal transportation rules are over twenty years old.

Our [research](#) compared regulations aiming to protect animals during live transport in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the EU, the UK and the USA. Our results show that:

1. Regulations in most jurisdictions are often insufficient or too vague to be deemed fit for purpose.
2. Specific regulations are rarely evidence-based.

## Key research findings

- **Clear definitions for unfit animals are rare** which means many of them may be transported when they should not.
- **Compromised and vulnerable animals are more likely to experience negative effects associated with transportation.** However, they hardly ever receive adequate additional protection.
- **Lengthy journeys makes it worse.** Except in some rare instances, no jurisdictions adopt 'absolute' maximum total journey durations (animals can be transported in several bouts indefinitely). Maximum journey durations without food, water and rest are sometimes provided, but these are often too long.
- **Most jurisdictions recommend avoiding animal transport during extreme climatic conditions.** However, only the EU sets temperature thresholds, which are not species-specific and only apply to long journeys.
- **Stocking density can prevent animals from accessing drinkers and change position.** However, space allowances are rarely clearly defined and do not consider these important animal needs.

## Policy recommendations

*Our recommendations to Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) propose changes to England's current animal transport laws ([The Welfare of Animals \(Transport\) \(England\) Order 2006](#) as derived from [EU Council Regulation n°1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport](#).*

- The number of animals being transported especially over long distances (e.g., >100km) could be further reduced by favouring alternatives (e.g. mobile abattoirs; more local abattoirs, meat transportation), consistent with The Smaller Abattoir Fund launched by the UK government in December 2023.
  - The UK should define more clearly what makes an animal unfit for transport by establishing a comprehensive list of clinical signs for each species, similar to the [Canadian regulations](#). Current legislation is too vague.
  - Draw a list of compromised or vulnerable animals (e.g., unweaned animals; end-of-career animals; pregnant females that are not considered as unfit for transport) which should benefit from shorter and more comfortable transport conditions,
- as [proposed](#) by the UK and Welsh governments in 2021 for some species (e.g., max nine hours of transport for calves up to nine months). Current legislation only provides limited additional protection to these animals.
- Reduce journey durations and introduce 'absolute' (i.e., from the place of departure to the final destination) journey times, as [proposed](#) by the UK and Welsh governments in 2021. Current legislation only provides long maximum journey durations without food, water and rest.
  - Adopt more ambitious and species-specific thresholds to ban long journeys during extreme climatic events than the current legislation, as [proposed](#) by the UK and Welsh governments in 2021. The [EFSA](#) and [FAWC](#) reports could serve as a basis for future regulatory improvements on this point.
  - Adopt more ambitious and species-specific space allowances to allow animals to adopt their preferred postures and for easier access to drinking devices inside vehicles. The [EFSA](#) and [FAWC](#) reports could serve as a basis for future regulatory improvements on this point.

### Work with us

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