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Animal Transport – Compartment height for cattle

UECBV Position

BACKGROUND

On 17th August 2017, The Dutch government informed the European Commission of the intention to change the standard height and loading density of certain animal species during transport.

In order to ensure that cattle have sufficient standing height and are not hindered in their natural movements, the Dutch government intends to introduce a staging height of 15 cm above the top of the bovine cattle as of 1-1-2018. As of 1-1-2019, this height should be increased to 20 cm.

This standard is a concretization of the requirement of the regulation that the animals, having regard to their size and intended transport, have sufficient floor space and height.

CONSEQUENCES

- For the businesses

On the basis of these standards, the vast majority of the means of transport in Europe will only be able to transport a part of the usual number of cattle.

Due to the limitations of the height of the means of transport, trucks can carry only one layer of calves destined for the slaughterhouse and only two layers of unweaned calves. As a consequence, the cost of transport will be greatly increased: primary sector returns will be under pressure, logistical problems arise and environmental pressures as a result of the considerably larger number of transport movements will be greatly increased.

All this will end up in a reduction of trade between Member States.

- On livestock transport, livestock farming and the environment

The transport of cattle and calves is a European matter.

In many locations, cattle and calves are kept and many animals are transported across borders by carriers of all kinds of nationalities.

Due to the size of cattle and calves, many transport movements are taking place to and from the Netherlands. ***For example, the Netherlands alone carries out 750,000 unweaned calves every year from abroad.***

Adjusting the standards for steering height in the Netherlands not only impacts Dutch carriers, but also a large number of European carriers of cattle. Since the height of lorries in the Netherlands is limited to 4 meters, the transport of cattle and calves is limited to two or three layers.

The transport of unweaned calves goes back from 3 to 2 layers and the transport of adult cattle and calves destined for the slaughterhouse is back from 2 to 1. All transporters who transport cattle to, through and from the Netherlands are affected by this intention and will, as far as possible, have to invest in new means of transportation.

As a result, increasing the height in the Netherlands has an impact on the whole of Europe, and the Netherlands determines the norm for almost all of Europe in that area. This could also mean that foreign carriers will be disabled, as they will be less able to invest in other livestock vehicles with a limited number of trips to and from the Netherlands.

Increased cost price transport

On an annual basis, these additional costs amount to more than € 7,000,000 a year based on 15 cm and almost € 17,000,000 in case of 20 cm.

Logistic problems

If the loading capacity of the livestock farms is reduced, the supply of the same number of animals will be due to a larger number of livestock units. Especially at the slaughterhouses, this will provide a file for the unloading and cleaning and disinfection sites.

Environmental effects

It should be understood that the increased number of transport movements involves an increase in environmental burdens. There is more road formation, noise pollution and exhaustion of gasses from trucks.

Scientific background

The Dutch government refers to the EFSA report published in 2011, which is referring to Lambooij et al. (Report 407 Wageningen University, November 2010).

However, the report gives insufficient scientific justification for the intention to increase the staging height of all bovine animals to 20 cm above the withers: in no case has damage to the backs, even at a height of 10 cm, been found.

Small differences in behaviour, heart rhythm, temperature and blood parameters are observed, but the relationship with the different height remains unclear.

Moreover, the findings on which the Netherlands determined the 20-cm-height proposition are based in particular on adult bovine research. Significantly younger animals, such as unweaned calves and calves destined for slaughter, have different body proportions. Therefore, it is not easy to translate the 20-cm height for adult cattle into these other categories. This would certainly require further investigation.

In a research carried out by the Friedrich-Loeffler Institute in 2011-2012 on ten long animal transports of adult cattle, it is found that the difference in height of 10 or 20 cm does not lead to a difference in wellbeing.

In both 10- and 20-cm heights:

- the temperature requirements of the regulation are met;
- no difference is observed with respect to ventilation;
- the above deck is touched occasionally, which is considered as irrelevant to the wellbeing of the cattle.

Legal framework

European Legislation, through Art.1 point 3 of Council Regulation 1/2005, clearly states that stricter rules can be implemented by Member States, but if they take place entirely on the territory of that Member State. Thus, transports that cross borders should not be obliged to comply with these rules that the Dutch Authorities are trying to implement.

CONCLUSIONS

The introduction of the standard cattle height of 15 and 20 cm above the largest animal's withers has a major economic and environmental impact. These standards have implications for all carriers in Europe and constitute a major barrier to trade, which is insufficiently scientifically substantiated and out of proportion.

The **European Livestock and Meat Trades Union (UECBV)**, founded in 1952, is the EU voice of national federations representing livestock markets, livestock traders (cattle, horses, sheep, pigs), meat traders (beef, horsemeat, sheepmeat, pigmeat), and meat industry (slaughterhouses, cutting plants and meat preparation plants).

Brought together within the UECBV are:

- ✚ an international association i.e. the **European Association of Livestock Markets (AEMB)**;
- ✚ a **Young European Meat Committee (YEMCo)**;
- ✚ the **European Natural Sausage Casings Association (ENSCA)**
- ✚ the **Organisation of European Shippers (OCEAN)**
- ✚ fifty-three national or regional federations in twenty-four of the twenty-eight Member States of the European Union, as well as Japan, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine.

In total, some 20,000 firms of all sizes and 230,000 jobs are represented within the UECBV through its national member federations.

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