

Guidelines For The Welfare Of Animals During Transport

Introduction

Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations is the legislation that governs the welfare of animals during transport in Ireland. The regulation came into force on the 5th of January 2007 and was given legal into Irish law by Statutory Instrument No 675 of 2006 i.e. European Communities (Animal Transport And Control Post) Regulations 2006. The key welfare requirement pertaining to the general conditions for the transport of animals is laid down in Article 3 of the Council Regulation:

'No person shall transport animals or cause animals to be transported in a way likely to cause injury or undue suffering to them.'

In order to comply with this welfare requirement, Article 3 (point b) further requires that:

'The animals are fit for the journey.'

Annex 1 of the Schedule of the Council Regulation details the technical rules governing the application of the Articles of the Regulation. Chapter 1 of Annex 1 (reproduced below) deals comprehensively with the technical rules for '*fitness for transport*' of animals. Any policy for the transport of animals, either healthy or not, must be based on this chapter.

It comes as no surprise that animals find journeys stressful. Stress can be caused by both physiological factors (e.g. temperature variations, fatigue) and psychological factors (e.g. fear, anxiety). It is generally accepted that if animals are fit and healthy prior to the journey then they will be better able to tolerate the stresses of the journey. Not only must an animal be *fit* prior to the journey but the animal should be capable of remaining *fit* during the journey. Therefore very young, very old, sick, or injured animals should not be transported, if they are unsuitable for the proposed transportation. Certainly, if transportation is likely to cause '*injury or undue suffering*', then it should not commence in the first place or proceed if it has already started.

As a general rule, the longer the journey the more stress an animal will potentially be exposed to.

A welfare assessment should be performed on all animals prior to transportation. Animal transportations can take many forms from short local journeys in standard transport vehicles to long international transportations in specialised vehicles. Irrespectively, the transporter is responsible for ensuring that animals are fit for transport and that the transportation will not cause '*injury or undue suffering*'. It is therefore essential that transporters are able to recognise animals that are unfit for transport. Those assessing the fitness of animals for transport will often need to draw on their experience of transporting animals but if there is any doubt as to the fitness of animals, then they should not rely on

this experience, but they should contact their private veterinary practitioner for expert advice.

As a general rule, if a transporter is in doubt as to the fitness of animals for transport then they should contact their private veterinary practitioner for expert advice.

Annex 1: Technical Rules

Annex 1 provides the technical rules for important aspects of the transport process, including fitness for transport, which is focused on below. The full text of Annex 1 Chapter 1 can be viewed at the end of this document.

*****The guidelines that follow are intended as a guide to the legislation and do not purport to be a definitive statement of the law.*****

Annex 1 Chpt 1.1

No animal shall be transported unless it is fit for the intended journey, and all animals shall be transported in conditions guaranteed not to cause them injury or unnecessary suffering.

An animal is '*fit for the intended journey*' if it is a healthy animal, free from disease or injury, which is physiologically capable of dealing with the normal stresses associated with the intended journey.

If there is any doubt as to these criteria, then the animal(s) should not be transported.

'*Transport conditions guaranteed not to cause injury or unnecessary suffering*' are a function of the initial fitness of the animal, the transport vehicle, planning, transport management and environmental circumstances.

If an animal is unfit for transport then it is likely to be injured and to suffer unnecessarily.

Animals that are Unfit for Transport

A complete list of conditions/ailments that would prevent the transport of animals is not possible or practical to produce, but may include:

- Conditions affecting the normal functioning of any of the organ systems e.g. digestive, respiratory, nervous.
- Conditions causing weight loss, emaciation, diarrhoea, vomiting.
- Conditions affecting the locomotion of the animal e.g. lameness.
- Condition preventing an animal from eating or drinking.
- Conditions causing fever.
- Any infectious or metabolic diseases.

As a general rule of thumb, any animal that exhibits clinical signs of sub-optimal health should not be transported.

Annex 1 Chapter 2

Animals that are injured or that present physiological weaknesses or pathological processes shall not be considered fit for transport.

This part of the annex lays down the general framework for those conditions that render an animal unfit for transport. The terminology used includes '*injured*', '*physiological weakness*', or '*pathological processes*', which are non-specific and wide-ranging. An *injured* animal should be obvious to transporters e.g. fractures, lameness, swelling, cuts, bruising. '*Physiological weakness*' may result from disease, injury, starvation, dehydration, fatigue. *Pathological processes* could involve such clinical signs as emaciation, diarrhoea, breathing difficulties, lameness, nervous signs etc.

The annex goes on to outline specific conditions that render an animal unfit for transport:

- i. **They are unable to move independently without pain or to walk unassisted;** Animals should be able to move normally and without pain. Animals should not need to be physically forced or coerced into movement, or require mechanical assistance. Generally, lameness is painful e.g. fractures, laminitis, but there may be situations where lameness may not be painful e.g. functional lamenesses associated with conformation. If there is any doubt whether or not an animal is suffering due to lameness, then expert advice from your private veterinary practitioner should be sought. While all species can suffer from lameness it is especially common among sheep, broilers, dairy cows and ponies.

<p>As a general rule, if an animal cannot walk onto a transport vehicle of their own volition, without assistance or pain, then the animal should not be transported.</p>
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- ii. **They present a severe open wound, or prolapse;** Animals with *any* wounds entering a body cavity e.g. chest or abdomen, are not fit for transport. This also includes surgical wounds e.g. caesarean section. If a wound is bleeding freely, or has become infected, the animal will be unfit. Any other sizable skin wound that is actively bleeding (other than ear tags damaged during loading in the case of livestock) makes an animal unfit. Prolapse may be 'internal', e.g. inguinal or umbilical prolapse, or 'external' e.g. vaginal or rectal prolapse. Animals with external prolapse are not fit for transport, as the prolapse could easily be damaged during transport. Animals with internal prolapse may be fit for transport if the prolapse is not causing pain and is unlikely to worsen or become damaged during the journey. Animals with ruptured prolapses must not be transported.
- iii. **They are pregnant females for whom 90 % or more of the expected gestation period has already passed, or females who have given birth in the previous week;** Animals in the final 10 % of gestation should not be moved e.g. a pregnant heifer should not be transported within one month

approximately of the expected date of gestation, where the normal gestation period is 270 days. Exact information on the expected date of gestation is often difficult to obtain but this may be found by enquiry from the herdowner/keeper based on service records or AI docketts. If an animal is visibly peri-parturient then the animal should not be moved until at least 7 days post-parturition. Signs of imminent parturition may include: increased size of mammary glands; seepage of milk from the teats; relaxation of ligaments around the pelvis; nest building and other behavioural changes; and discharges from the birth canal. Animals showing any of these signs are not fit for transport.

N.B. (Annex 1 Chpt 1.6) Lactating females of bovine, ovine and caprine species not accompanied by their offspring shall be milked at intervals of not more than 12 hours.

- iv. **They are new-born mammals in which the navel has not completely healed;** The navel of young animals must have healed completely before they can be transported. The time for this varies between species. The navel is generally healed when the umbilicus is dry and shrivelled and the skin beneath the navel is completely healed over. The healing of navels may be slowed down due to infection or damage.
- v. **They are pigs of less than three weeks, lambs of less than one week and calves of less than ten days of age, unless they are transported less than 100 km;** Pigs, lambs and calves should not be transported before they are 3 weeks, 1 week, and 10 days of age, respectively, unless the transport is less than 100km. For such journeys, consideration should be given to the special requirements of the specific animals. A transport of less than 100km for the specific species should not be considered unless the navel of the animal is adequately healed.
- vi. **They are dogs and cats of less than eight weeks of age, unless they are accompanied by their mother;** Dogs and cats of less than eight weeks of age may be transported, only if their mother accompanies them, and they have constant access to her. Transport, prior to eight weeks while accompanied by their mother, should not occur unless the navel of the animals is adequately healed

N.B. While points v & vi (above) outline conditions that may allow animals to be transported at a younger age, no transport should occur unless the navel of the animal is sufficiently healed.

- vii. **They are cervine animals in velvet;** Deer cannot be transported when they are in velvet. Velvet is the name given to deer antlers in their early stage of growth, before the antlers harden into bone. In the early stage of growth,

antlers are soft tissues, covered with fine, soft hair or 'velvet'. Velvet grows very quickly at up to 2cm per day but is shed after about one month, at which point deer can be transported again.

Exemptions for Registered Equidae

N.B. (Annex 1 Chpt 1.7) Requirements of points iii & iv do not apply for registered Equidae if the purpose of the journeys is to improve the health and welfare conditions of birth, or for newly born foals with their registered mares, provided that in both cases the animals are permanently accompanied by an attendant, dedicated to them during the journey.

The movement of late pregnant mares, or newly birthed mares and foals is therefore permitted where there are clear benefits for the animals' welfare in moving them e.g. accessing specialised facilities or expertise.

However, pregnant animals with parturition immediately imminent (e.g. labour commenced) should not be transported, as such movement may cause unnecessary suffering and pain.

Annex 1 Chpt 1.3

However, sick or injured animals may be considered fit for transport if they are:

- i. **Slightly injured or ill and transport would not cause additional suffering; in cases of doubt, veterinary advice shall be sought;** It is difficult to define or describe what conditions render an animal slightly injured or ill. However, this definition must be applied to the transportation of animals. An animal should only be transported if it is slightly ill or injured, if:
 - The condition does not, or has minimal, impact on the animal's ability to withstand transport.
 - Transport must not cause the animal to suffer unnecessarily or more so than if it had not been transported.

N.B. Transport must not aggravate an animal's slight illness or injury.

If there is any doubt as to whether a slightly ill or injured animal is suitable for transport then a private veterinary practitioner should be contacted for his expert advice on the particular case.

N.B If there is any doubt as to whether an animal is suitable for transport; the animal should not be transported until the situation is clarified.

In general, the transport of slightly ill or injured animals should be avoided. If there are reasons necessitating transport, then additional measures to ensure the avoidance of unnecessary suffering should be utilised e.g. deep bedding for lameness.

N.B. Slightly ill or injured animals should only be transported on short journeys, in limited circumstances, where the journey is absolutely necessary.

Limited circumstances may include:

- Transport to a veterinary surgery for purposes of diagnosis or treatment
- Transport from a farm to the nearest available slaughterhouse for immediate slaughter. This is premised on the basis that:
 - a) The illness or injury is slight (see definition above).
 - b) The animal will be accepted at the slaughterhouse or abattoir
 - c) The transport is to the nearest available premises without undue delay.
 - d) All additional welfare requirements for the journey are met.
- ii. **Transported for the purposes of Council Directive 86/609/EEC (1) if the illness or injury is part of a research programme;** This refers only to the transport of animals used in medical research programmes. No additional suffering or injury should be imposed by the transport of such animals, and particular attention should be paid to the additional care, which may be required to protect their welfare.
- iii. **Transported under veterinary supervision for or following veterinary treatment or diagnosis. However, such transport shall be permitted only where no unnecessary suffering or ill treatment is caused to the animals concerned;** An animal may be transported to a veterinary surgery when it is sick or injured for diagnosis and/or treatment of the condition. Such movement is premised on the basis that:
 - a) The transport is under veterinary supervision i.e. the veterinary surgeon has been made aware of the proposed transport and has consented to its suitability.
 - b) The transport will not cause any unnecessary suffering or ill treatment to the animals concerned.

N.B. If there is any doubt as to whether the transport will cause unnecessary suffering or ill treatment, then the transport should not proceed, and if veterinary advice is required, then the veterinary surgeon should visit the animal in situ on-farm.

- iv. **Animals that have been submitted to veterinary procedures in relation to farming practices such as dehorning or castration, provided that wounds have completely healed;** Only animals with completely healed wounds from castration, dehorning, tail-docking or other veterinary

procedure may be transported. This would exclude fresh, open or bleeding wounds.

Annex 1 Chapter 1.4

When animals fall ill or are injured during transport, they shall be separated from the others and receive first-aid treatment as soon as possible. They shall be given appropriate veterinary treatment and if necessary undergo emergency slaughter or killing in a way, which does not cause them any unnecessary, suffering.

The speed at which ill or injured animals are separated from their group and receive treatment, is a function of the diligence of the transporter at regularly inspecting the animals. If veterinary treatment is required then this should be made available at the first possible opportunity. If an animal is suffering severely or in-extremis then the animal may need to be humanely euthanased or brought directly to a slaughterhouse/abattoir/knackery for slaughter, to alleviate suffering.

Annex 1 Chapter 1.5

Sedatives shall not be used on animals to be transported unless strictly necessary to ensure the welfare of the animals and shall only be used under veterinary supervision.

Sedatives should only be given to animals undergoing transport where they are absolutely necessary. They can reduce the ability of an animal to cope with the stresses of transport by interfering with thermo-regulation and locomotory perception thus increasing the chances of the animal falling and sustaining injuries.

<p>N.B. If an animal can only be transported sedated, then expert veterinary advice should be sought, as to the suitability of the transport.</p>
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As sedatives must be prescribed by a registered veterinary surgeon, clear guidance should be sought from the prescribing veterinary surgeon, explaining the risks and side effects of sedative drugs, and their appropriateness in the given situation.

ANNEX I

TECHNICAL RULES

(as referred to in Article 6(3), Article 8(1), Article 9(1) and (2)(a))

CHAPTER I

FITNESS FOR TRANSPORT

1. No animal shall be transported unless it is fit for the intended journey, and all animals shall be transported in conditions guaranteed not to cause them injury or unnecessary suffering.

2. Animals that are injured or that present physiological weaknesses or pathological processes shall not be considered fit for transport and in particular if:

- (a) They are unable to move independently without pain or to walk unassisted;
- (b) They present a severe open wound, or prolapse;
- (c) They are pregnant females for whom 90 % or more of the expected gestation period has already passed, or females who have given birth in the previous week;
- (d) They are new-born mammals in which the navel has not completely healed;
- (e) They are pigs of less than three weeks, lambs of less than one week and calves of less than ten days of age, unless they are transported less than 100 km;
- (f) They are dogs and cats of less than eight weeks of age, unless they are accompanied by their mother;
- (g) They are cervine animals in velvet.

3. However, sick or injured animals may be considered fit for transport if they are:

- (a) Slightly injured or ill and transport would not cause additional suffering; in cases of doubt, veterinary advice shall be sought;
- (b) Transported for the purposes of Council Directive 86/609/EEC (1) if the illness or injury is part of a research programme;
- (c) Transported under veterinary supervision for or following veterinary treatment or diagnosis. However, such transport shall be permitted only where no unnecessary suffering or ill treatment is caused to the animals concerned;
- (d) Animals that have been submitted to veterinary procedures in relation to farming practices such as dehorning or castration, provided that wounds have completely healed.

4. When animals fall ill or are injured during transport, they shall be separated from the others and receive first-aid treatment as soon as possible. They shall be given appropriate veterinary treatment and if necessary undergo emergency slaughter or killing in a way, which does not cause them any unnecessary, suffering.

5. Sedatives shall not be used on animals to be transported unless strictly necessary to ensure the welfare of the animals and shall only be used under veterinary supervision.

6. Lactating females of bovine, ovine and caprine species not accompanied by their offspring shall be milked at intervals of not more than 12 hours.

7. Requirements of paragraphs 2(c) and 2(d) do not apply for registered Equidae if the purpose of the journeys is to improve the health and welfare conditions of birth, or for newly born foals with their registered mares, provided that in both cases the animals are permanently accompanied by an attendant, dedicated to them during the journey.