

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Protection of animals during transport

The first European Community Directive on the protection of animals during transport was adopted in 1977. The Directive has since been amended twice, most recently in 1995 by Council Directive 95/29/EC. The latter introduced several changes. Transporters of animals were made responsible for implementation of the provisions and had to be approved by competent authorities in the member states, loading densities were set for farm animals, and it became a requirement for journeys in excess of 8 hours to be planned in relation to provisions concerning vehicles and travelling times. The Directive also set an obligation for review and reporting on the implementation of its provisions. Five years on from the adoption of the Directive, the Commission has now published its report (see details below). The conclusions are not good. The main findings listed in the summary include:

'Member states have difficulties in applying the Directive. The Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) points to the low level of priority given by Member States in implementing the Directive.'

'Difficulties in collecting inspection reports from Member States and insufficient harmonization of the data transmitted limited their use.'

'The transport of horses from Central and Eastern European Countries to the European Union is a particular area of concern. Little long-term improvement has been secured.'

The summary also includes in the list of main technical findings: inadequate road vehicles, illegal route plans and non-compliance with travel-time limits, negligence and poor handling of animals, and overloading.

In response to the problems identified, the report describes a variety of areas in which remedial action must be considered. Among these are: that Member States must allocate rapidly adequate resources to meet their obligations for this Directive, that specific procedures must be set up to facilitate checks on implementation of route-planning, that the Community should become a party to the European Convention for the Protection of Animals during International Transport, and that unloading and resting of horses passing through the border of the Union should become compulsory. The report also specifies that several aspects of the directive, notably relating to travelling times and loading densities, should be evaluated scientifically, and that measures to encourage the slaughter of animals near their farms of origin also merit examination.

Report from the Commission to the Council and European Parliament on the experience acquired by Member States since the Implementation of Council Directive 95/29/EC amending Directive 91/628/EEC concerning the protection of animals during transport. December 2000. Published by the Commission of the European Communities. 23pp. Available at <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/index.html>.

Animal welfare assessment internet resource

A database of literature relating to the assessment of animal welfare compiled by staff of the Department of Laboratory Animal Science, Utrecht and the Animal Welfare Information Center at the USA National Agriculture Library has been made available on the internet. This comprises two lists of publications from the scientific literature, one on aspects of the assessment of welfare including pain and distress, the other on related literature. The lists are presented alphabetically by author and there is a facility for short-cutting to authors by surname by clicking on the initial of their surname. The lists are likely to prove helpful to persons new to the