3 - Transporting Cattle, Sheep and Pigs

The guidance on fitness for transport appears as a series of leaflets. Leaflets 1 and 2 are essential reading to all involved in the transport of animals. The remaining leaflets in the series provide more detailed and in some cases species-specific guidance that is targeted at particular audiences.

This leaflet provides further details on the transport of cattle, sheep and pigs. It should be read together with leaflet 2 “Explaining ‘Fitness for Transport’”. Further questions can be addressed to your local Animal Health Divisional Office.

1. The Intended Journey

Cattle, sheep and pigs are usually transported several times in their lives. Journeys may be short, for example from farm to a local market, or they may be long, involving export of livestock to mainland Europe. It is important for a transporter to consider how the intended journey will affect his stock. Long journeys can be more stressful for animals; the distances transported will be greater; the weather may be more variable; a ferry journey may be involved; more breaks may be required. Animals undergoing long journeys therefore need to be fitter than animals only being transported short journeys. Additionally, animals on long journeys may need better transport conditions. This is why higher quality vehicles are required to undertake long journeys.

2. Animals that are Unfit for Transport

Although it is not possible to provide a complete list of all conditions that will make cattle, sheep or pigs unfit for transport, more specific guidance is given here. Animals that are suffering any of the following will not be fit for transport.

- Any condition causing weight loss or more than minor scouring
- Any condition causing breathing difficulties
- Any condition obviously affecting the normal walking of the animal
- Any condition that prevents an animal from eating or drinking
- Any condition making the animal depressed, nervous or aggressive
- Animals suffering from wasting (emaciation) or a temperature (fever)
- Animals suffering from any infectious disease should not be transported
- Recently shorn sheep are unfit for transport from November to March every year

Lameness is a common condition. There are very few circumstances where lameness is not a painful condition. As a general rule therefore, cattle, sheep or pigs that are suffering lameness in one or more legs must not be transported.
Prolapses are relatively common conditions in farm animals where body organs or parts of organs are displaced into abnormal positions. An example is a vaginal prolapse, where the vaginal lining is pushed out of position so that it visible externally at the entrance to the birth canal. When an animal suffers a prolapse, attempts should be made to correct the prolapse before moving the animal. An animal suffering from a prolapse can only be transported in limited circumstances – usually for treatment or slaughter. The prolapse must be small, non-painful, not bleeding, and must be protected during transport, for example by single penning the animal.

Cattle, sheep and pigs with wounds entering any body cavity are unfit for transport. This includes wounds to the wall of the abdomen, the chest, and the groin. Any other sizable wound that is actively bleeding (other than ear tags damaged during loading) makes an animal unfit. If the wound is small, almost healed, non-infected and not causing the animal any pain, then the animal may be fit for transport.

Cattle, sheep and pigs in the last 10% of their gestation are not fit for transport. If the exact date of service is not known from farm records, a best guess should be made. For example, the gestation period of a sheep averages 150 days; the last 10% is 15 days. Sheep should not be transported in the final 15 days before they are expected to give birth. A transporter should also take into account other signs that the animal is about to give birth, like bagging up, milk seepage, relaxation of the pelvic ligaments, and birth canal discharges. Cattle, sheep and pigs that have just given birth must not be transported until 7 days after the birth.

Young stock must not be moved until the navel has healed completely. At the very least, the external cord should dry and shrivelled, and the skin underneath completely healed. Lambs less than 1 week of age, calves less than 10 days of age, and pigs less than 3 weeks can only be transported on journeys less than 100 km.

The technical rules on fitness for transport in Chapter 1 of Annex 1 to EC Regulation 1/2005 do not apply to transport carried out by farmers of their own animals in their own means for a distance of less than 50 km from their holding. This means that a farmer may transport – in his own vehicle – his own late pregnant ewes and cows, and recently born lambs and calves short distances between or within nearby farm premises. However the planned retention of the provisions on the fitness of animals to travel in WATO '97 means the farmer could not move ewes or cows that have given birth during the preceding 48 hours, or those likely to give birth on the journey, or new-born lambs or calves until their navel has completely healed.

Cattle, sheep and pigs of any age that have undergone castration, disbudding, dehorning, surgical tail-docking or similar procedures cannot be transported until any wounds resulting from the procedure have completely healed.
3. **Cattle, Sheep and Pigs that are Slightly Ill or Injured**

In some circumstances, animals that are slightly ill or injured can be transported. As a general rule, the condition must be minor, should not be expected to worsen or cause the animal any unnecessary suffering or distress during transport, and should not be painful. Each case must be judged individually, and the welfare of the animal must be the first consideration. Where there is any doubt, a veterinary surgeon should be consulted. After examination of the animal, the vet may offer advice on whether transport would be acceptable, or indicate that the animal is only fit for a short journey where the transport conditions are improved to benefit the animal’s welfare. This provision enables farmers to transport animals for example to a veterinary surgery for treatment, or when necessary, to a slaughterhouse for casualty slaughter. Although an animal that sustains a severe injury to a limb might often best be killed on farm, in some situations, where transport conditions can be improved, and the animal can be moved without causing further pain, it may be possible to transport it to the nearest slaughterhouse for emergency slaughter.

4. **Lactating Females**

Whenever cows, ewes or goats in milk are transported without their young, they must be milked at intervals of no longer than 12 hours.

5. **Fitness Checklist**

- All animals should be fit for the intended journey
- Animals should not be transported if they are ill or injured
- Slightly ill or slightly injured animals can be transported, but only if the transport causes them no additional suffering or pain
- Young stock can only be transported in specific circumstances
- Transporters should take all reasonable measures to protect the welfare of animals they are transporting
- The assessment of fitness should be performed by someone competent to assess the health of the animals – if in doubt consult a vet
- The vehicle and animal compartments should be in a good state of repair and not cause the animals any harm
- Animals that fall sick or injured during a journey should receive appropriate first aid or other veterinary treatment, or undergo emergency slaughter
- Drivers should have contingency plans in place to deal with unexpected problems encountered during journeys