

Scots calves exporter broke livestock rules

More calls for ‘inhumane’ trade to be banned after animal died in cramped lorry en route to Spain

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A typical lorry used to transport livestock abroad

The controversial export of live animals broke strict EU rules when young calves from Scotland were kept in a cramped truck for almost 20 hours without adequate rest.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) confirmed that a shipment in November was “non-compliant” with animal welfare laws, which state that unweaned calves must spend no more than nine hours in transit, followed by an hour’s rest. One of the animals, aged between four to six weeks, died en route to northern France.

The confirmation comes amid claims that Scottish calves were trapped on a boat for at least 16 hours yesterday when it appeared to suffer a mechanical breakdown in the Channel.

Thousands of animals are discarded by dairy farmers each year and sent to Spain, where they are fattened and slaughtered to satisfy demand for beef and veal. Campaigners claim the long journey is harmful, but the industry insists the alternative is to shoot the creatures at birth.

“Calves should neither be exported nor shot at birth. They should instead be reared in the UK for beef,” said Peter Stevenson, of Compassion in World Farming. “We urge Scotland’s dairy farmers to halt this inhumane trade.”

Last September, P&O, one of Britain’s largest ferry operators, banned the transport of live cattle after a BBC Scotland investigation highlighted concerns about a trade in unweaned calves.

Before the ban, animals were usually given a day’s rest in Ireland, about eight hours after being loaded onto a truck in Scotland, before heading to France by boat.

Now they are trucked hundreds of miles across England to Ramsgate in Kent. Documents released under freedom of information by the UK’s Animal and Plant Health Agency, part of Defra, show that animals have endured gruelling journeys of up to 20 hours to reach rest stops in northern France where they are properly fed and given space to roam.

Since September, five shipments of young calves have been sent from Scotland to Spain.

On November 8, Scottish calves were loaded onto a truck at 7am and arrived at Ramsgate at 6.30pm. Handwritten notes state that “very bad traffic” forced the driver to push on to the Kent port where the animals “rested” for an hour before the boat departed at 7.30pm.

Section 3: Place of Destination			
1. Keeper at the place of destination/Official Veterinarian – Name and address (*): [REDACTED]			
2. Place and Member State of destination/Checking point (*):		3. Date and time of the check: 10-11-18 19:55	
4. Checks Performed:		5. Outcome of the checks	
		5.1. COMPLIANCE	5.2. RESER-VATION(S)
4.1 Transporter	[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Authorisation number (*)	[REDACTED]		
4.2 Driver	[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Number of the certificate of competence			
4.3 Means of transport	[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identification (*)	6917 KPD R2091BCX		
4.4 Space allowances	94m ²	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Average space/animal in m ²	0.40m ²		
4.5 Journey log records and journey time limits		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6 Animals (specify the number for each category)			

The Animal and Plant Health Agency document released under freedom of information

The journey exceeded the EU limit of nine hours. Furthermore, witnesses insist the animals were not adequately rested. “The truck was not stationary for the required one hour at the boat as suggested by the driver’s notes,” said Nicola Glen, the UK inspector for Eyes on Animals, a Dutch charity.

“It cannot be classed as ‘rest’ when the truck is being loaded onto the boat, as it is in motion. Time and again it has been shown it is almost impossible for the authorities to ensure this trade is carried out in accordance with the animal welfare rules.”

The driver’s log shows he arrived at a rest station in northern France at 3.45am local time on November 9, more than 20 hours after the animals were loaded onto the truck in Scotland. Records show a calf was dead on arrival, though no information on cause of death was given.

EU rules in force since 2007 state that animals must be transported in a way that avoids causing injury or unnecessary suffering. Defra officials said the company involved in transporting the calves was registered with another EU member state, which had been alerted to the breach. Regulatory action can include prosecution and suspension or withdrawal of a licence to transport livestock.