

PRESS INFORMATION

Brussels, 26 September 2007

Animal welfare groups call for urgent action to limit the risk of animal suffering and diseases in live transport

The EU is not doing enough to protect the health and welfare of animals in transport. Although the newly launched Animal Health Strategy 2007-2013 makes the commitment to protect the health of animals through good welfare, it fails to address the well-documented risk of animal movements in the EU. It also ignores the massive scientific evidence linking transport with poor welfare and disease. We therefore call on the Commission and Member States to limit both the number and the length farm animal are transported in the EU and to rigorously enforce the existing rules.

This is the message sent to the EU institutions by Eurogroup for Animals, Animals' Angels and Compassion In World Farming at a Press Conference in Brussels today.

Peter Stevenson, CIWF's Chief Policy Advisor, says "*Over six million farm animals are transported over huge distances across Europe each year. Packed into overcrowded trucks, animals often suffer terribly during these long journeys from heat, thirst and exhaustion. Many Member States fail to enforce EU legislation designed to safeguard the welfare of animals during transport. This inhumane trade must be ended - animals should be slaughtered near to the farm of rearing; the meat can then be transported to wherever it is wanted.*"

The three groups are today presenting a balance sheet of what is happening on the roads, based on concrete evidence from the field and inspection reports. Such illegal practices like injured animals lifted by cranes or pushed by Caterpillars, and frequent beating of exhausted animals are shown in a shocking video, "Forbidden Journeys".

About this video, Lesley Moffat, Animals' Angels full-time investigator, comments: "*It is extremely disturbing that the welfare and health of seriously sick and injured animals depends on private charitable organisations forced to film discreetly, whereas official veterinarians and slaughterhouse managers are turning a blind eye. This, together with the EU's weak and often ineffective sanctioning system results in an incredible amount of animal abuse and cruelty in Europe.*"

The groups also criticise the fact that the Animal Health Strategy has been very weakened and does not have clear objectives in the area of live transport, although the Commission expert's report had identified this issue as a key factor in preventing disease.

"*The focus of the strategy is prevention but there is very little concrete action to improve the welfare and, as a result, the health of animals. Food safety in general and health and welfare of animals is not an area for political compromises*", says Sonja Van Tichelen, Director of Eurogroup for Animals. "*It is unacceptable that in order to protect their transport industry, Member States seem prepared to take the risk of disease outbreaks.*"

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