



DIER EN RECHT

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Animals suffer in European transports - Holland is setting the wrong example

Dismay during animal transports does not only occur in Southern and Eastern Europe, but also in the North-West. From The Netherlands alone, per year hundreds of thousands of cows, sheep, goats and horses, more than seven million pigs and hundreds of millions of chickens and turkeys are exported to other countries, alive. This makes The Netherlands Europe's largest exporter of livestock. Control of animal transports and compliance with the European Transport Regulation is seriously lacking. Long distance animal transports and animal suffering are therefore intertwined.

On the following page you will find several examples of recent animal transports originating in The Netherlands, during which EU transport legislation has been ignored. The consequence: suffering and death. Stichting Dier en Recht (*The Animal and Law Foundation*) has reported many of these cases to the Dutch General Inspection Service (AID). Despite the enormous amount of evidence that has been provided, no serious research has been done by the AID, and there has been no prosecution. We also have strong indications that reports of malpractice by Dutch transporters, sent to the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture by foreign authorities, have been totally ignored.

The Dutch union of traders as well as the union of transporters admit that there is a number of maleficent transporters. The government services have been aware of these transporters and their practices for years, yet do not take any action. According to reliable sources, 90% of all trucks are overcrowded and it is common practice to pick up extra animals after departure. The Dutch government however seems to accept this overcrowding.

Control by a vet during the loading of animals onto trucks is not obligatory according to the Dutch protocols, in defiance of EU Transport Regulation 1/2005. There is little or no control on the road, and sufficient sanctions have not been imposed. Three warnings are given before sanctioning, even in case of severe offences.

Due to this lack of control and sanctioning, EU export subsidies are also still being appointed on a large scale to transporters that do not comply with EU Regulations. These subsidies will only be cancelled by 2013. Until then it is thus made profitable to subject animals to extremely long distance transports. Animals' Angels found out that it has been impossible to fulfil legal requirements in practice until August 2007, due to lack of staging points.

Dier en Recht urges that all animal transports be equipped with GPS tracking systems and weather stations by January 1st 2008, with direct linking to a central data bank. Furthermore, slaughter animals should only be transported to the nearest slaughterhouse; transports exceeding 8 hours should be forbidden; export subsidies for live animals need to be cancelled; official vets should adequately control animals and truck during loading, before signing any transport documents; no licences for transports should be issued when temperatures during transport are expected to exceed 30 degrees Celsius or drop below zero. Finally, Dier en Recht urges the Dutch government to acknowledge the malpractices during animal transport and take its responsibility in respect to control and sanctioning.

Stichting Dier en Recht ('The Animals and Law Foundation') is a small foundation in The Netherlands dealing with the legal aspects of animal welfare. A team of six (voluntarily working) solicitors, a student of law and a specialist in human-animal relations are working to achieve the practical goal of stricter legislation in favor of animals, linked at better implementation and control. Besides that we strive for increased awareness in society concerning the (lack of) well-being of animals and the negative consequences of their exploitation for the environment.

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A Dutch transport with 35 pregnant cows in September 2006 lead to 15 deaths. A Dutch official veterinarian allowed transport of these cows, which had completed more than 90% of their pregnancy. The vet received a warning. (Report: Animals' Angels).



In May 2007, 190 piglets died during a Dutch transport to Italy. Italian authorities reported case to the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture.

In July 2007 Dier en Recht and Varkens in Nood followed a Dutch transport with 972 pigs to Spain. The animals were not given water or breaks, and the truck was overloaded. Upon arrival 13 pigs had died and many were wounded.



In the end of August 2007 civilians called the police when they saw blood dripping from a Dutch truck filled with pigs in Germany. The truck was overloaded and the 127 pigs had severe biting wounds.



In October 2006 Animals' Angels followed a Dutch transport of 800 piglets to Greece. Journey times and rest periods were ignored. Upon arrival, 263 piglets had suffocated. (Report: Animals' Angels).



In February 2007 heifers were transported from The Netherlands far into Russia. The transport continued for 5 days on end without unloading, water or rest. Temperatures outside dropped to -16 degrees Celsius; the trucks were not heated. Exporters receive EU subsidies for live transports to a non-EU country. (Report: Animals' Angels)



The German police stopped a truckload of Dutch Shetland ponies near Munich in August 2007. The truck was allowed to transport 56 ponies, but 108 were present. The water installation didn't work, the animals had not been fed for 20 hours and the truck didn't have a transport license. The ponies were on their way to the slaughterhouse in the south of Italy.