

# Presentation Points of attention on animal welfare during Dutch presidency

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I am happy to have the opportunity to speak at the opening of the meeting of the EP-Intergroup 'Welfare and Conservation of animals'

Animal welfare is an important topic of discussion in our current society

Although correct and good handling of animals has been a symbol of respect and civilization since Mozes declared laws on the respectful and correct treatment of animals in 1300 bc,

I think we can say that over the last 10 or maybe 20 years something has changed

There is much more attention for animal welfare from many different angles and the perspective on the definition of good welfare has changed.

Animal welfare nowadays concerns much more than only having sufficient food, water and a shelter,

It is also about natural behaviour, health and sustainability

Animal welfare leads to a debate in society and also in the national and European parliament

In some countries political parties have come forward to put animal welfare prominently on the agenda

Animal welfare is not a hype but is basic need in our society, it is part of a sustainable future

In the coalition agreement of the Dutch government it is stated that animal welfare is important and is well supported within the Dutch society

(The latest years, much in The Netherlands has improved, and that line will be continued)

However, individual EU countries are no isolated islands

It is important that high ambitions in the field of Animal Welfare are also reflected in EU regulations

This is important, not only for fair competition within the EU (level playing field), but also for the improvement of animal welfare across EU member states

It is important to look for joint European approaches

Therefore, several countries have made concerted efforts with the aim to improve animal welfare

I recall the Declaration on Animal Welfare, of Vught, and following position papers with which the European Commission and the member states are called to pursue improvements in legislation and animal welfare, and promote awareness and knowledge

EU platform on animal welfare

Before or during next meeting of the Agricultural Council, also (a paper with) suggestions for a European Platform on animal welfare will be presented

Such a Platform (of stakeholder organisations and authorities of member states), run by the European Commission, could create more momentum and focus on the animal welfare challenges of the EU

A Platform could facilitate discussions and exchange of experiences and best practices on implementation, control and enforcement of animal welfare regulations

Examples of platforms, like the meetings of National Contact Points on Transport, have already shown that regular meetings with authorities of member states can be very useful

**A Platform could also contribute to:**

Networking, including sharing of knowlegde and information on research

**Transport**

A specific topic which will likely lead to further discussions is transport

The Agricultural Council in 2012 carried out an extensive examination and discussion on the European Commission's report on the impact of that Regulation

In the conclusions resulting from that discussion, it did not take firm positions, for example on the duration of transport.

Although some Member States have advocated revision by the Commission of the Regulation (- 1/2005 -) on the protection of animal during transport – like Denmark, Germany and The Netherlands who published a position paper -, the Commission up to now is not willing to do so, as it considers that more is to be gained by improving the application of the existing regulations than by (re-)writing new ones

Revision of the Transport regulation and reduction of transport times might be a future initiative for the European Commission to take up, but this is not expected to take place during the Dutch presidency period

You will be aware that The Netherlands already for a long time has advocated the reduction of the maximum transport time for slaughter animals to 8 hours and also improvement of transport conditions, like space allowances.

Meanwhile, Netherlands recently has started stricter enforcement, on rules on necessity for feed and drenching of animals on long distance transports.

Specific point of attention at this moment also concerns the draft new EU regulation on official Controls, to which parts of the current EU Transport Regulation will be transferred.

### **Phasing out of physical mutilations**

Reduction of physical mutilations is also a an important policy point for The Netherlands

In Dutch view, reduction of mutilations is considered as an indicator for sustainable animal husbandry

Animals should be able to demonstrate natural behaviour, mutilations should be limited as far as possible.

Important examples are beak trimming in poultry and castration of piglets.

May be the subject of mutilations could get further attention by the European Commission during Dutch presidency

Netherlands still goes for stopping surgical castration entirely in 2018

We provide input for the European project Boars 2018, in which Dutch participants also have close contact with the European Commission.

Together with Germany and Denmark we have urged all stakeholders to sign the Brussels declaration and to act accordingly.

Finally, we have understood that the European Commission will publish her guidelines on enrichment materials and prevention of tail biting for pigs during the oncoming months.

Reduction of the use of antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance

Phasing out of mutilations can to some degree also lead to reduction of the need use and treatment with antibiotics.

Further, investment in animal welfare also comprises investment in more robust and healthier animals that need less antibiotics

Furthermore, - in relation to an EU Action Plan against AMR – we strive for specific implementing acts under the Animal Health Law, including infection prevention measures in animal husbandry, to be adopted

Incorrect use of antibiotics in both human and animal health care has an effect on the development of AMR. This will lead to less treatment possibilities for animals. This means some infections can become more difficult and/or expensive to treat, which would have a negative effect on animal health and animal welfare.

## **Other important points**

It is important that the Commission finalises its actions, still outstanding from the current animal welfare strategy 2012-2015.

The Dutch presidency would welcome the Commission to come up with her examination of the perspectives of an updated, comprehensive and clear legislative framework for animal welfare

The Presidency would be in favour of a new Commission communication on an EU Strategy on the protection and welfare of animals for the period of 2016 until 2020

Like the resolution of the European parliament (from end November) states it would be good to build on the work of the previous strategy and to ensure the continuation of a framework for delivering high animal welfare standards across the Member States.

The Netherlands would like to see existing regulations to be improved in accordance with new scientific insights, technological innovation and socioeconomic trends (addressing existing shortcomings and omissions)

Until now, the Commission is of the opinion that focus is needed on the implementation of the remaining actions points of the current Strategy – as was also requested by the EP in her resolution – and on the implementation of current legislation.

Specific, new animal welfare proposals probably will wait until after the semester of the Dutch presidency.

It may also take some extra time to gain sufficient support from EU member states for the suggestions following from the Animal Welfare Declaration of Vught

The ambitions and actions of the Commission on the animal welfare topics will be followed closely by the Council.