The welfare of horses during transport to slaughter and the movement of low value Equidae

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Presentation contents

• Cover World Horse Welfare’s latest Dossier of Evidence, key recommendations to improve welfare and our thoughts on the way forwards following the Commission’s report.
World Horse Welfare

- Working around the world to improve horse welfare.
- A charity funded entirely by members of the public.
- Our approach:
  - Campaign
  - Educate
  - Provide primary care
- Ethos:
  - Base sustainable solutions on evidence and expertise-based.
  - Collaborate with other to improve welfare.
European Horse Network

• Not for profit lobbying group established in 2009

• Currently 15 members – including European Federation of Thoroughbred Breeders Associations, European Pari Mutuel Association and World Horse Welfare

• Aims to act as a platform for the horse industry to communicate common issues with European institutions

• In 2011 the EHN, through MEP Julie Girling, established a Horse Group within the European Parliament

• www.europeanhorsenetwork.eu
What will improve equine welfare?

- **Long-term:** An end to the long-distance transportation of horses for slaughter in Europe; replacing it with a carcase only trade.
- **Short-term:** Welfare improvements for horses transported on these journeys, supported by robust enforcement, including both slaughter and low value Equidae.
The evidence of the need for change

- **2008** - the first Dossier of Evidence presented to the European Commission, including evidence and recommendation for change.
- **In October 2011** the second Dossier of Evidence submitted.
Dossier of Evidence – key issues

- Exhaustion
- Dehydration
- Injury
- Disease
- Stress
The horses

• No such things as a typical slaughter horse or donkey.
• All ages and sexes.
• Wide variety of types and builds.
• Different reasons for slaughter:
  – Reared specifically
  – Elderly
  – Injured / debilitated / ill
  – Unable to work / perform job
  – Unwanted.
• Low value Equidae also transported in poor conditions.
Fatigue and Exhaustion
Signs of fatigue and exhaustion observed during field investigations:

- Lack of response to external stimuli
- Chin resting
- Low head carriage
- Closed or half-closed eyes
- Limited interaction with other horses
- Attempts to lie down despite excessively short tethers.
Transport is tiring for Equidae

High centre of gravity and shape makes them unstable.

Use head and neck to balance, need room to brace with legs spread wider than their body to balance.

Bracing and moving with the vehicle in order to balance uses roughly the same amount of energy as walking for the same length of time (Doherty et al. 1997).
Exhaustion increases with journey duration due to cumulative energy losses, increasing the risk of injury and disease.
Dehydration
Drinking behaviour observed during field investigations:

- Aggression between horses at commencement of watering.
- Voracious appetite for water – ‘frantic’ drinking.
- Extended drinking bouts (in excess of five minutes).
- Drinking despite apparent fear of the hosepipe.
- Drinking until trough empty.
Dehydration - a serious welfare problem

• Numerous factors have been linked to dehydration:
  – Long periods of transportation (Stull & Rodiek 2000)
  – Stress
  – Heat and humidity
  – Restricted circulation of air
  – Lack of water

• Under current conditions Equidae could become severely dehydrated within 10 hours (Marlin 2011, personal communication).
Dehydration – role in the development of disease


• Can result in health problems such as gastrointestinal disturbances and colic (Edwards 1999, van den Berg at al. 1998, Kaya et al. 2009).
Injury

Field observations September 2010 and February 2011:
• 85% of horses had at least one acute injury.

Marlin et al. (2010):
• Prevalence of severe injuries and lameness significantly higher in horses following long-distance transportation than prior.
• On average 6 horses per standard-sized shipment of 22 horses, had at least one acute injury on arrival.
Pain

Behavioural data from one randomly selected shipment observed in 2010, showed 94% of horses had an abnormal stance and 83% were weight-shifting, both are indicative of pain or discomfort.
Space, orientation and partitions

Regulation 1/2005:

- Includes a space allowance that is inadequate for many horses, with some not physically able to fit into the legal space.
- It allows transport at a 90° angle of orientation.
- Partition design is open to interpretation.

The next part of the Dossier will focus on this area (2012).
• Lack of space, travelling at 90 degrees and poorly designed partitions can and do cause injuries.
Disease

- Poor biosecurity
- Mixing of horses
- Transport of vectors
- Leads to a greater risk for all horses across Europe.
Disease - findings from recent field investigations:

93% of horses observed after 24 hours transport showed visible clinical signs of disease, with animals affected in every shipment.
Disease - research indicates…

- An elevated head posture can lead to marked increases in mucus, bacteria and neutrophils in the trachea within 6-12 hours (Racklyeft and Love 1990, Raidal et al. 1995, 1996).

- Shipping fever is a recognised sequel to long-distance transport in some Equidae.
European Food Safety Authority (2011) scientific report for the Commission

- Increase pyrexia in horses transported for 10 hours.
- Immunosuppression in horses transported for 12 hours.
- A large increase in clinical signs of acute respiratory disease… after road transport in excess of 12 hours.
- EFSA have recommended a maximum journey limit for horses – this should be implemented.
Dossier of Evidence – recommendations

• **Maximum journey limit of 9 to 12 hours** for all Equidae intended for slaughter and non-registered Equidae.

• Constant **access to water** before and after the journey, with provision of water every 4.5 hours during the journey, or when required. Forage should be provided.

• **Increased space allowance** – based on a minimum distance between the Equid’s body and the lorry sides, partitions or other Equidae.
Key Recommendations continued

• Improved and robust enforcement, combined with detailed guidance (fitness for transport and water provision) and training for all individuals involved in the transportation process.

• World Horse Welfare’s Dossier of Evidence 2011, has 14 recommendations to improve equine welfare during transportation.
How can this be achieved?
Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005
- Article 32

- ...Commission shall present a report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the impact of this Regulation on the welfare of animals being transported...
- ...the report shall take into account scientific evidence on welfare needs of animals, and the report on the implementation of navigation system...
- ...This report may be accompanied if necessary by appropriate legislative proposals concerning long journeys, in particular as regards journey times, resting periods and space allowances.

WE STRONGLY URGE THE COMMISSION TO DEVELOP AND RELEASE A LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL.
Request for action

In view of the latest evidence from World Horse Welfare and EFSA:

• Use Article 32 of Regulation 1/2005 to introduce a proposal for a maximum journey limit, resting periods and space allowances.

• Develop guidance to improve cross Member State implementation and enforcement, particularly in the areas of fitness for transport and water provision.
Request for action

• Ensure enforcement is thorough and robust, becoming harmonised across all Member States:
  – Ensure that navigations systems are harmonised across all Member States, implemented and used for enforcement.

• Undertake of meeting of key stakeholders to discuss how to improve enforcement and develop guidance.
Thank you for listening