

## Special issue: revisions to European regulations on animal welfare

On 7 December, the European Commission issued a [press release](#) announcing the publication of two draft regulations intended to form part of its revision of the European regulations on animal welfare.

Because of the significant interest of these legislative proposals and their accompanying documents, the FRCAW team has chosen to publish this special newsletter.

For more news and information, visit [our website](#).

Wishing you all a very happy festive season,  
The FRCAW team

## Revision of EU regulations: the story so far

The [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) provided for a complete overhaul of European animal welfare regulations, which was to take the form of a legislative package consisting of four regulations – on the welfare of animals kept for commercial purposes, on animal welfare during transport and at the time of killing, and on animal welfare labelling rules. The legislative proposals were due to appear in Autumn 2023, after which they would be the subject of negotiations among Member States before being adopted by the Council and the European Parliament. The preparation and production of the legislative package has been a lengthy process and is summarised in [this infographic](#) from the FRCAW.

In October 2023, though, the revision of EU animal welfare rules [disappeared from the European Commission's 2024 work programme](#). This was followed, on 23 November, by an announcement from the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety that the legislative proposal for the regulation on transport would be published in December 2023. The Commissioner confirmed that work was continuing on the other three regulations.

## European Commission announcements 7 December 2023

In a [press release](#) issued on 7 December, the European Commission announced the publication of a [proposal for a regulation on the welfare of animals during transport and related operations](#), as well as a [proposal for a regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability](#). While the Commission failed to announce measures to fulfil its [commitment](#), dating back to June 2021, to act on the "End the Cage Age" European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) to end the caging of farm animals, it did respond to the "Fur Free Europe" ECI, instructing EFSA to draw up a scientific opinion on the welfare of animals reared for fur production to inform its decision-making. The Commission has confirmed that it will continue to work on the other three regulations from the planned legislative package.

## Draft legislation on transport: key measures

The revisions to the European regulation on the transport of live animals are based on the [EFSA opinions on the transport of live animals](#) and on the [Impact assessment](#) published in conjunction with the draft legislation. In the words of the draft, their "specific objectives are, among others, to: - reduce animal welfare problems linked to long journeys and repetitive unloading and re-loading [...]; ensure that animals have more space when transported; improve the conditions of transport of vulnerable animals; avoid exposing animals to extreme temperatures; facilitate enforcement of EU rules on the protection of animals [...]; better protect animals exported to non-EU countries; and better protect cats and dogs transported in connection with an economic activity."

The proposed legislation includes measures concerning the authorisations to be obtained by the transport organiser and the transporter, certification of road vehicles and other modes of transport, obligations prior to departure, during transport and at the place of destination, conditions for the transport of terrestrial animals, transport to and from third countries, the obligations of the competent authorities, sanctions and procedural provisions.

It specifies that responsibility for the fitness of the animals for transport lies with the transporter, from the time of loading at the place of departure to unloading at the place of destination, whether inside or outside the EU.

It recommends an increase in the space allowance per animal, and maximum journey times of 9 hours for animals intended for slaughter and, for other animals, two non-consecutive periods of 21 hours (with a minimum of 1 hour's rest after 10 hours) separated by a 24-hour rest period with unloading.

For unweaned calves, lambs, kids, piglets and foals, the maximum journey time is 19 hours (9 hours + 1 hour's rest + 9 hours), provided there is an effective on-board feeding system. Calves must be at least 5 weeks old and weigh at least 50 kg before they can be transported, and piglets, lambs and kids must be a minimum of 3 weeks old.

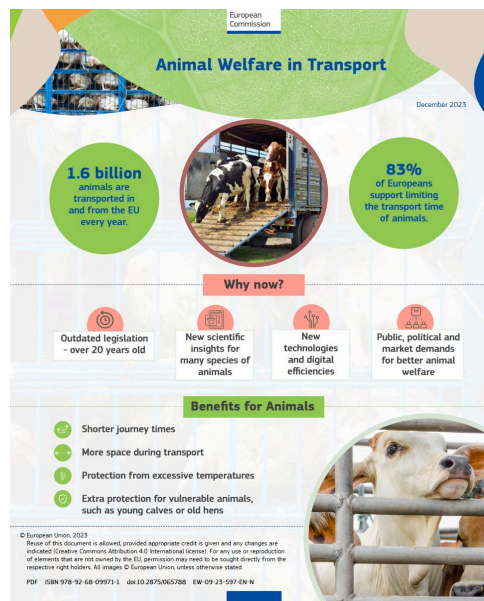
In the event of extreme weather conditions, the authorisation of long-distance transport will be dependent on the weather forecast. For example, in hot weather, if the forecast temperature is between 25°C and 30°C, only short journeys (9 hours maximum) will be authorised during the day (i.e., between 10am and 9pm), and access to water must be provided for the animals. If the forecast temperature is above 30°C, only night-time transport (i.e., between 9pm and 10am) will be permitted, and the space allowance for the animals must be increased by 20%.

The transport of cats and dogs is subject to updated provisions that are better tailored to these species and is authorised only for animals at least 12 weeks old.

Road transport vehicles must be equipped with a geolocation tracker system that communicates with a TRACES-compatible information system.

For most measures, transition periods are provided, based on the impact assessment.

[Read more](#)



[Infographic](#) from the European Commission's website

## What are the contents of the impact assessment for the proposed transport regulation?

The impact assessment report examines the animal welfare, economic, social and environmental impacts of the legislative proposal. It identifies a range of benefits from the proposal – in addition to its highly positive effects on animal welfare and health, this would create a more level playing field for trade between Member States. It is expected to bring economic benefits for the industry, with reduced mortality during transport, fewer animals seized in abattoirs, improved meat quality and lower veterinary costs. It reduces administrative costs, with an estimated saving of €71 million a year available from digitisation and is also designed to take better account of societal expectations. The proposal's disadvantages include the need to adapt to new transport patterns, the cost of purchasing new vehicles and vessels to meet the increased space allocation requirements, an increase in production costs estimated at €0.014 per kilo of meat, milk or eggs per year, with an overall negative impact on production levels, imports, exports and consumer prices that is, generally, below 1%. The increase in consumer prices is estimated to lie between €2.81 and €14.09 per consumer per year, depending on diet and income. The report considers the economic impact on transport companies to be limited, and the length of the adaptation period to be sufficient for transporters to achieve a smooth transition. A general review is scheduled to be conducted ten years after the regulation comes into force.

The report has consulted the relevant stakeholders and concludes that the industry looks favourably on most of the proposed measures, with the exception of the proposed reduction in live animal transport times, particularly outside the EU. NGOs, on the other hand, would like to see even shorter transport times and a ban on the transport of live animals outside the EU.

[Read more](#)

## Reactions from the animal welfare sector and associations to the proposed regulation on animal transport

The reactions expressed at the time of publication appear to be less favourable than suggested by the impact report.

In [its press release](#), Copa-Cogeca expresses concerns over the practicalities of implementing the proposed measures. For example, the 9-hour limit on transport time to slaughter would mean that some farmers would no longer be able to access an abattoir, while capping journey times for purposes other than slaughter would disrupt supply chains. Transport restrictions in the event of extreme temperatures would have a discriminatory effect on transport in certain countries, particularly in the South. It also considers the transition periods to be too short and asserts that raising the minimum transport age for unweaned animals would entail additional infrastructure changes and operating costs that many farmers would find too much to cope with.

Meanwhile, the view expressed by NGOs, such as [CIWF France](#) and the [Fondation Brigitte Bardot](#), is that the authorised journey times and the list of possible exemptions are both still too long. They express their regret that the opinion of European citizens, 94% of whom are in favour of banning the export of live animals, has not been taken into account and that industry shortcomings highlighted by CIWF and Eurogroup for Animals in a [recent report](#) have been ignored. This report made use of data from TRACES, the European Commission's online management tool for the notification, certification and monitoring of trade in live animals and animal products. The areas of non-compliance it identified concerned the keeping of registers and logs, the actual duration of journeys, use of and changes to assembly centres, the recording of non-final destinations as final, waiting times at ports, and the conditions under which calves are transported.

Last, the NGOs reserve their greatest criticism for the postponement of the publication of the full legislative package and, in particular, the promised measures from the European Commission to bring an end to the cage rearing of farmed animals.

## Proposed regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability: key measures

This is the first legislative proposal to be made by the European Union on the welfare of dogs and cats kept in kennels, shelters or pet shops. It is based on the [EFSA report](#) on the welfare aspects of the housing and health of cats and dogs kept in commercial breeding establishments.

The various chapters cover the obligations of operators with regard to traceability, skills and animal care, including the requirement to take account of an animal's behavioural needs; the identification and registration of animals; the obligations of the competent authorities; the entry of animals into the EU; and procedural provisions.

Among the main measures included are the compulsory identification by microchip and registration of animals sold in the EU, compulsory approval of breeding establishments, harmonisation of requirements on housing, breeding and care, awareness-raising among buyers on the care, nutrition and veterinary needs of pets, proper training in animal care and welfare for animal caretakers in kennels, shelters and pet shops, the means to check the identification and registration of animals supplied via online platforms, and the obligation for imported animals to meet the same welfare standards as those reared in the EU.

[Read more](#)



[Infographic](#) from the European Commission's website

## Overview of the illegal trade in dogs and cats in the European Union

A [DG SANTE report](#) on the illegal trade in cats and dogs was published on the same day as the legislative proposal on the welfare of dogs and cats. It draws on an investigation coordinated by DG SANTE and carried out by members of the EU's agri-food fraud network between July 2022 and July 2023. Its purpose was to detect irregularities and cases of falsification in official documents accompanying pets, to target undeclared and unregistered sales, and to deter illegal trade by reinforcing controls at borders and within the EU. The report concludes that the illegal movement of cats and dogs has considerable consequences, not only for animal health and welfare and public health but also for the economy, in the form of consumer fraud, unfair competition for breeders, tax evasion and undeclared income.

With regard to online trading, the authorities lack the resources to carry out sufficient numbers of checks of adequate quality, given the volume of advertisements (several hundred thousand adverts are posted online every day) and the resourcefulness shown by illegal traders. The animals involved in this black-market trade are often too young, are not properly vaccinated, and are supplied by breeders who cannot easily be identified, posing potential problems not only in the realms of public and animal health but also for animal welfare and consumer protection. Some shelters and animal protection associations, despite their ostensible function as animal rescue organisations, have come under suspicion for the illegal breeding, importing and trading of cats and dogs. The report concludes that, until the vast gap between the promise of substantial rewards and the imposition of inadequate penalties is reduced, fraud in the pet trade will continue.



**Illegal trade of cats & dogs**  
**EU enforcement action**



Cover of the [DG SANTE report](#)

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