

Special Newsletter on the Revision of European regulations on animal welfare

December 2023

On 7 December, the European Commission issued a [press release](#) announcing the publication of two legislative proposals relating to the revision of European regulations on animal welfare.

We have decided to publish a special issue of our newsletter devoted to this news without waiting for the next issue, which is due out at the end of January 2024.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy festive season!

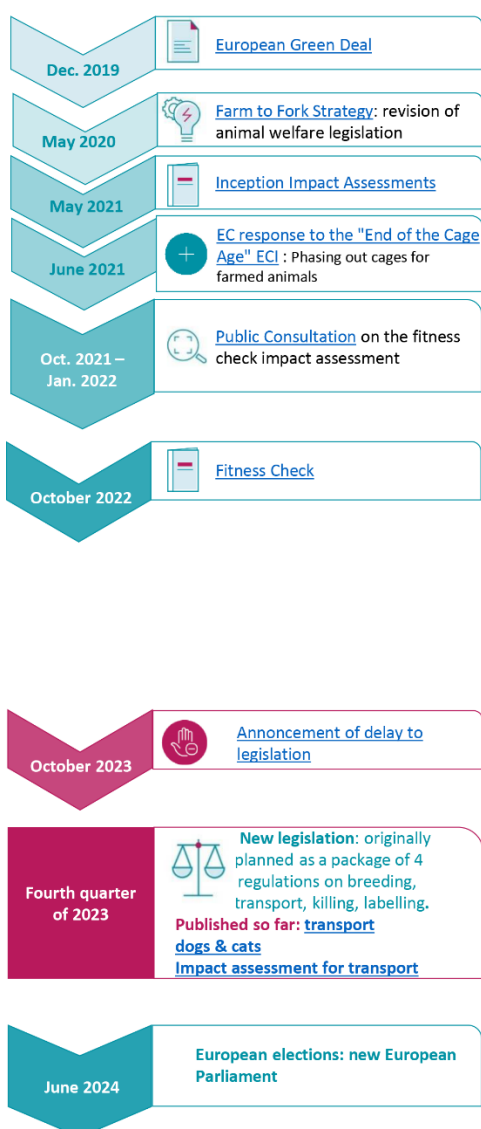
Revision of the regulations: reminders of previous stages

The [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) provided for a complete overhaul of European animal welfare regulations, which was to consist of a legislative package of four regulations: on the welfare of animals kept for commercial purposes, on the protection of animals during transport and at the time of killing, and on animal welfare labelling rules. The legislative proposals were due to be published in autumn 2023 and would then be the subject of negotiations in the Member States before being adopted by the Council and the European Parliament. The legislative package has been a long process, as summarised in this [infographic](#) (see next page).

However, the revision of EU animal welfare rules was [no longer included in the European Commission's 2024 work programme](#) presented in October 2023. On 23 November, the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety confirmed that a legislative proposal on transport would be published in December 2023, and announced that work was still in progress on the other three issues.

Events linked to the revision of European regulations

European Commission



EFSA



The European Commission's announcements on 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](#). Although there was no mention of measures to end cage farming for the animals mentioned in the "End the Cage Age" European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), contrary to the [commitment made by the European Commission](#) in June 2021, the Commission responded to the "Fur Free Europe" ECI by instructing EFSA to draw up a scientific opinion on the welfare of animals reared for their fur in order to inform its decision-making.. The Commission has confirmed that it will continue to work on the other three regulations included in the legislative package initially planned.

Main measures of the [transport bill](#)

The revision of the European regulation on the transport of live animals is based on the [EFSA opinions on the transport of live animals](#) and on the [impact assessment](#) published in conjunction with the draft law. It aims to: reduce the harm to animal welfare caused by long journeys and repetitive unloading and reloading; increase the space allowance per animal during transport; improve transport conditions for vulnerable animals; avoid exposing animals to extreme temperatures; facilitate the application of EU animal protection rules; better protect animals exported to third countries, and cats and dogs transported as part of an economic activity.

The bill includes measures relating to the authorisations to be provided by the transport organiser and the transporter, the means of transport and their certification, the obligations prior to departure, during the journey and on arrival, the conditions for transporting land animals, transport to and from third countries, the obligations of the competent authorities, penalties and procedural provisions.

It specifies that it is the transporter who is responsible for the fitness of the animals for transport, from loading at the place of departure to unloading at the place of destination, whether inside or outside the EU.

It recommends an increase in space per animal and maximum journey times of 9 hours for animals intended for slaughter; and 21 hours (with a minimum of 1 hour rest after 10 hours) then 24 hours rest with unloading then 21 hours (with a minimum of 1 hour rest after 10 hours) for other animals.

For unweaned calves, lambs, goat kids, piglets and foals, the maximum journey time is 19 hours (9 hours + 1 hour rest + 9 hours), provided there is an effective 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 goat kids at least 3 weeks old.

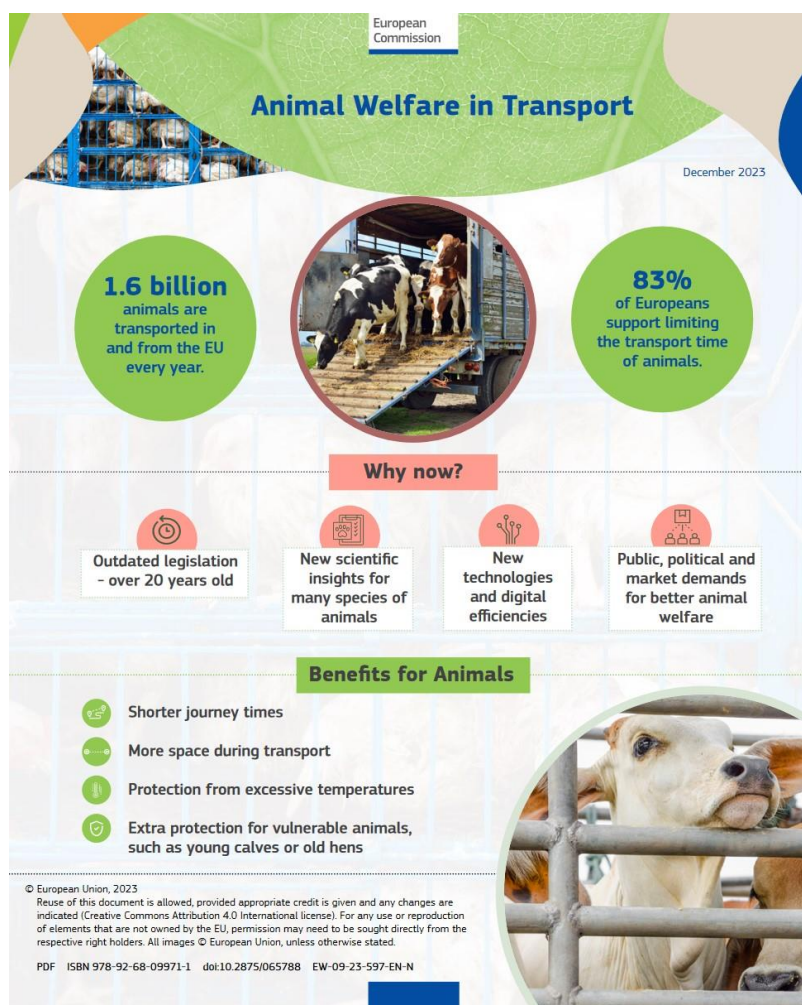
In the event of extreme weather conditions, long-distance transport will be authorised depending on the weather forecast. For example, in hot weather, if the forecast is between 25°C and 30°C, only short journeys (9 hours maximum) will be authorised during the day, with access to water for the animals. If the forecast is above 30°C, only night-time transport (i.e.

between 9pm and 10am) will be permitted, and the space per animal will have to be increased by 20%.

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

Means of road transport must be equipped with a positioning system that communicates with a TRACES-compatible information system.

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



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

What does the impact assessment accompanying the transport bill say?

The impact assessment report evaluated the animal welfare, economic, social and environmental impacts of the legislative proposal. It identifies a series of advantages to the proposal: in addition to the highly positive effects on animal welfare and health, it will create a more level competitive playing field between Member States. The proposal is expected to bring economic benefits for the industry in terms of reduced mortality during transport; fewer animals

seized in slaughterhouses, better meat quality and lower veterinary costs; and for the administration in terms of estimated savings of €71 million a year as a result of the reduction in the administrative burden due to digitisation. It also means that society's expectations can be better taken into account. The disadvantages include the need to adapt to new transport patterns; the cost of purchasing lorries or ships due to the increased space per animal; an increase in production costs estimated at €0.014 per kilo of meat, milk or eggs per year; and an impact of generally less than 1% on production levels, imports, exports and consumer prices. The increase in consumer prices is estimated at between €2.81 and €14.09 per consumer per year, depending on diet and income. The economic impact on transport companies is considered to be limited, and the adaptation time sufficiently long to allow them to make a smooth transition. A general assessment is planned ten years after the regulation comes into force.

The report questioned the various stakeholders and concludes that most of the proposed measures have been favourably received by industry members, with the exception of the 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.

Reaction of the animal protection sectors and associations to the proposed law on animal transport

The reactions expressed seem less favourable than indicated in the impact report.

In [a press release](#), Copa-Cogeca expressed concern about the practical feasibility of the measures. For example, limiting transport time to slaughter to 9 hours would mean that some farmers would no longer have access to a slaughterhouse, and capping journey times for purposes other than slaughter would break supply chains. Transport restrictions in the event of extreme temperatures would have a discriminatory effect on transport in certain countries, particularly in the South. Transition periods are considered too short. Raising the minimum age for transporting unweaned young would mean additional infrastructure adaptation and operating costs that many farmers would be unable to bear.

On the other hand, NGOs, such as [CIWF France](#) and the [Fondation Brigitte Bardot](#), feel that the authorised journey times are still too long, and that there are too many possible exceptions. They regret that the opinion of European citizens, 94% of whom are in favour of stopping the export of live animals, has not been taken into account, and that the shortcomings highlighted by CIWF and Eurogroup for Animals in a [recent report](#) have not been taken into account. The report was based on consultation of TRACES data, the European Commission's online management tool for notifying, certifying and monitoring trade in live animals and animal products. The non-conformities identified concern the keeping of registers, the actual duration of journeys, the use of and changes to gathering centres, destinations indicated as final which are not, waiting times in ports, and the conditions under which calves are transported.

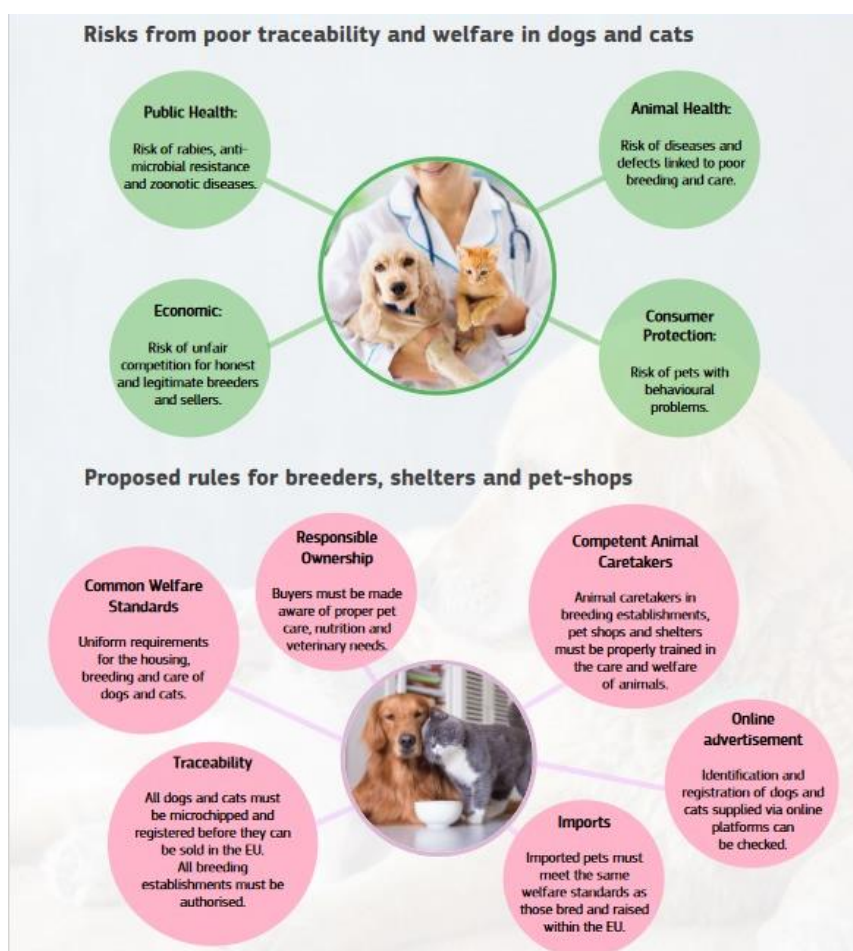
Finally, the NGOs deplore above all the postponement of publication of the entire legislative package, and in particular the measures promised by the European Commission to put an end to cage rearing.

Main measures of the [regulation proposal on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability](#)

This is the first legislative proposal in the European Union concerning 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 housing and health of cats and dogs kept in commercial breeding establishments.

The various chapters of the text cover the obligations of establishment operators in terms of traceability, skills and husbandry, including taking account of the animals' behavioural needs; the identification and registration of animals; the obligations of the competent authorities; the entry of animals into the EU; and procedural provisions.

The main measures include compulsory identification by microchip and registration of animals sold in the EU, and approval of breeding establishments; harmonisation of rules on housing, breeding and care; raising purchasers' awareness of the care, feeding and veterinary needs of pets; adequate training in animal care and welfare for animal handlers in these establishments; the possibility of checking the identification and registration of animals supplied via online platforms; the obligation for imported animals to meet the same welfare standards as those reared in the EU.



[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 is published on the same day as the legislative proposal on the welfare of dogs and cats. It follows an investigation coordinated by DG SANTE within the EU's agri-food fraud network from July 2022 to July 2023. Its aim was to detect irregularities and falsification of official documents accompanying pets, to target undeclared and unregistered sales and to deter illegal trade through reinforced 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 through consumer fraud, unfair competition for breeders, tax evasion and undeclared income.

As far as online trade is concerned, the authorities lack sufficient resources to carry out checks in sufficient quantity and quality, given the volume of adverts (several hundred thousand are posted online every day) and the adaptability of dishonest sellers. The animals involved in this trafficking are often too young and poorly vaccinated, and come from breeders who are difficult to identify, which can pose problems not only for public and animal health, but also for animal welfare and consumer protection. Certain shelters and animal protection associations, ostensibly dedicated to animal rescue, have been suspected of being involved in the illegal breeding, import and trafficking of cats and dogs. The report concludes that as long as there is such a discrepancy between the potential profits and the weakness of the penalties, fraud in the pet trade will continue.



Cover of the [DG SANTE report](#)