

FACTS ABOUT OUR FOOD **~LONG DISTANCE TRANSPORT~**

Animals raised on today's factory farms are transported at least once and often several times on journeys that can be long and arduous, and result in extreme suffering.

OVERVIEW

The stress of life for today's factory-farmed animals does not end with a short journey to the slaughterhouse. Often, animals raised for food are transported long distances for "fattening" or slaughter. Transportation is one of the most stressful situations animals must endure, and can result in severe injury, illness or even death.

THE STRESS OF TRANSPORT

Long haul transportation (longer than eight hours) is common and poses significant risk to animals due to water and food deprivation, exhaustion, jostling and piling, over-heating or exposure to cold temperatures. The importing and exporting of animals for food is a global business. Animals are transported by motor vehicle, sea vessel, railway or aircraft. For example, Canadian cattle are shipped to Mexico by truck.

"Downer" – is an industry term to describe an animal too sick or injured to walk or stand. Downers are a serious consequence of the animal agriculture industry, causing animal suffering and human health hazards. Downer animals should be humanely killed on the farm, not dragged onto vehicles to slaughter plants, in hopes of obtaining "salvage" value from suffering animals. Despite the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) recent ban on transportation of downer animals, downer animals still occur.

Prior to implementing the ban on the transport of downer animals, a sample survey conducted by the CFIA, Canada's food regulator, revealed the numbers of downers being transported to be staggering. In 2001, 7,382 downer cattle – mostly dairy cows, worked to death – arrived at nineteen federal slaughter plants and three auction markets, with the vast majority "going down" on the farm. A 2003 survey of pigs at 35 CFIA-inspected sites spanning two months revealed 4684 downers; this is the tip of the iceberg since it covered only a handful of sites.



Pigs who died in transport from overheating

Loading and unloading – rough treatment of animals during loading and unloading often involves excessive electric prodding. Most downer pigs result from rough, aggressive handling from farm to slaughter plant.

"Spent hens" – birds being slaughtered following a year of egg production, are especially vulnerable to rough handling and too often arrive injured or dead at slaughter plants.

Overcrowding – causes trampled animals and downers, and does not allow sufficient space for animals to lie down during long journeys. Overcrowding causes decreased air flow and leads to high ammonia levels and poor air quality. Chickens, pigs and sheep are particularly susceptible to problems from poor air quality, and often die en route.

LEGISLATION

The transportation of farm animals in Canada is governed by regulations (Part XII) under the federal *Health of Animals Act*. The regulations briefly outline provisions for food, water and rest, space, temperature control and ventilation, segregation by species, including provisions for nursing animals and calves. However, the standards are not adequate to ensure the welfare of animals, since some animals arrive at their destination with injuries, illness, or dead.

Enforcement – is not adequate, with too few CFIA inspectors and only spot-check inspections on Canada’s highways. Violations occur, including truck drivers surpassing time limits, inadequate bedding or weather protection for animals, and poor driving which causes animals to lose their balance. Charges are infrequently laid and fines are minimal.

Regulations stipulate pigs and horses and chickens may travel 36 hours without water, food or a rest stop, in addition to a five-hour food withdrawal prior to travel. Cows, sheep and goats may legally be without water, food or rest for 48 hours, or 52 hours within Canada, in addition a five-hour food withdrawal prior to travel. **That’s more than two days and nights without water, food or rest.**

Newly-hatched chicks may be transported 72 hours before a stop is required.

These times can increase at airports or borders while animals wait to be inspected by a veterinarian and customs. Live animals need, but do not have, priority in truck line-ups.

The regulations permit beating animals during loading and unloading, stipulating, “No person shall beat an animal being loaded or unloaded in a way to cause injury or undue suffering.” The regulations prohibit the transport of any animal that is ill, injured, pregnant or fatigued, but only if such transportation does not cause “undue” suffering – a vague term open to interpretation.



An injured and emaciated dairy cow at an Ontario auction

Weak enforcement of transport regulations means animals that are diseased or injured, and in pain (including downers), are routinely transported in violation of the law. Documents obtained through access to information laws reveal animals with broken backs and legs, or prolapsed internal organs, are being transported to slaughter.

INDUSTRY CODE OF PRACTICE

Canada’s *Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals – Transportation* was published by the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council in 2001. The recommendations are drafted by producers’ organizations and reflect status quo practices. The code is much the same as the federal regulations, with minor recommended differences for travel times without water, food and rest. The code is voluntary and not enforced.

WHAT IS NEEDED – REGULATIONS

- 1) Require slaughter near the home farm instead of long distance transport
- 2) Require trucks to be outfitted with water on board if journeys exceed 8 hours
- 3) Require controlled mechanical ventilation/heating systems
- 4) Provide adequate space for animals to lie down on long journeys
- 5) Better enforcement of the regulations prohibiting downer transport
- 6) Prohibit electric prods during loading and unloading, and animals should not be beaten, hit or kicked
- 7) Require tachographs on trucks
- 8) Require formal training for drivers
- 9) Require special lanes for animal transport vehicles at borders
- 10) Require increased enforcement of transport regulations, including weigh station personnel, police and SPCA officers in addition to CFIA inspectors
- 11) Improved on-farm conditions in the dairy industry and early removal of compromised animals from the farm to prevent downers

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The **Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals** is working to end the suffering of farmed animals during transport. You can help make a difference:

- If you see an animal transport problem, such as rough handling, inadequate weather protection or overcrowding,

contact the police or the nearest CFIA office. (To find the local number, call CFIA at 1.800.442.2342 or 613.225.2342 or search www.inspection.gc.ca.) It is important to record the vehicle's licence, transport company name, description of the driver, date, time, and location.

- Currently, federal animal transport standards are under revision. Write your MP and ask for stronger transport regulations for farmed animals, to include the points listed above.

For more information, please contact us

Email: info@humanefood.ca; Website: www.humanefood.ca

Mail: 213-33 Hazelton Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5R 2E3