

Trailing of spent breeding hens and roosters from the Netherlands to a Polish slaughterhouse

---External report---



Summary: On May 14th 2013 a team from Eyes on Animals and Animal Welfare Foundation was on the roads of the Netherlands to conduct random checks of livestock trucks. At a poultry farm in Brabant several trucks were seen being loaded with spent breeding hens and roosters. The transport company, Van der Berg, is known to bring poultry on a regular basis to Poland so we decided to trail one to record total length of journey and if possible check on the condition of the animals and the crates. Trailer Licence OK 20 PZ. Total driving time was 12.5 hours, loading time was approx.. 2.5 hours and waiting time in lairage at slaughterhouse up to 4 hours for some birds. The birds were crowded but upon calculating the density it was, surprisingly, within the EU norm. The crates were not equipped with a water system. As the wind-protection tarps were up, we could only check on a few birds. We were not allowed into the slaughterhouse but the official veterinarian met with us after and had the details of the consignment faxed over from the slaughterhouse to show us everything.

****Please note that almost all poultry transports are not within the scope of the law, and this report is not to single out VD Berg. Improvements are needed across the whole poultry transport industry ****

Violations:

EC 1/2005 Article 3

Annex 1 Ch I, Pt 4

Annex 1 Ch II, Pt 1.1f, Pt 1.2

Annex 1 Ch V, Pt 2.1a

14.05.2013

18:30 Observe several poultry trucks at a poultry farm in Erp (Brabant, the Netherlands).

21:37 VdBerg poultry truck leaves poultry farm, loaded with poultry. **Trailer Licence OK 20 PZ**. Drove to a nearby weigh bridge to be weighed (on Keldonkseweg near street De Laren). A car is following us as we trail the poultry truck.

22:13 poultry truck gets n the A50

22:35 truck stops at a Texaco gas station on the A50. The young driver (son of mister Van der Berg) comes out to see us. We explain who we are and that we will trail him to document the welfare of the birds during the journey. We explain that we are also interested in the different designs of crates being used in practice. The crates cannot be seen due to the side tarps covering all of them. He kindly pulls open part of the side panels so we can check on some of the chickens on board, and the crates. The crates they use have sliding top doors to load the birds, which he feels is better than the doors that open upwards (us too). The crates look in good shape, we do not see any that are seriously broken. Nevertheless, the floors of the crates are bending down slightly under the weight of the birds and the headspace is very limited. There is also no access to the animals during transport. The photo below shows clearly that the birds cannot stand up in a natural position, and if they all did ventilation would be seriously impeded.





The man in the car that has been following us, is Mister Van der Berg. He approaches us too. He will take over driving from now on, his son will return home. Mister Van der Berg says that he has loaded 9 chickens per crate, and that each bird weighs around 3.5kg. We try to count, and think we see 10 but it is difficult to be certain as they are very tightly packed.

22:55 the poultry truck drives off and continues on the highway.

23:17 drives direction Deventer E30

23:50 on the A1 direction Osnabrueck (Germany)

15.05.2013

3:50 still on the A2 (crossing northern Germany)

04:39 chicken truck enters a parking lot on the side of the highway and parks to keep his tacographs in order.

We check on the birds in the back bottom corner, as the wind-tarp is broken there so it flaps open. We do not see any serious injuries (no wings or feet caught, no dead birds). But they also look crowded and the headspace is restrictive.



We measure the crate – 60cm x 80cm x 30cm. We indeed count 10 birds, not nine. The available floor space is slightly less as they are diamond shape – estimate 74cm in length. Thus 60cm x 74cm x 30cm

EU regulation: 3kg - <5kg must receive minimum of 115cm² per kg.

Crate provides: (60cm x 74cm) 4440 cm² floor space / 10 birds x 3.5kg = 126,9 cm² each

Thus EU maximum density was, **surprisingly**, respected. Photo below shows that the floor of the crates is bending from the weight of the birds above, further restricting ventilation and headspace.



We speak with vdBerg who tells us he is working on plans to make a new design of transport container for spent hens. (We meet with VDBerg and the carrosserie on June 18th to see this development- it is a crate design with a water system attached). He tells us that he will let the Polish slaughterhouse know that we are trailing him.

05:40 Poultry truck leaves parking lot and joins back on highway. There is now another vdBerg poultry truck. They are driving in convoy. Licence plate of this new one is OK 87 PL. The driver of this truck did not want us to follow the first truck so he tried to push us, but also any other cars trying to get in between, off the road. He stayed very closely behind the first poultry truck, swerving a lot. This second truck also put on his right-turn signal as if they wanted to take an exit, and at the last moment would stay going straight in an attempt to trick us. Mister vdBerg had been driving calmly and professionally the whole time, and we talked with each other and things were out in the open- why one of his drivers was driving so dangerously and obnoxiously remains unclear but was not pleasant for the chickens on board his truck and unfortunately gives a bad image to the transport company.

07:45 Poultry trucks cross into Poland.



10:00 VdBerg poultry trucks arrive at slaughterhouse Merda slaughterhouse in Wolsztyn, Polen.

10:05 We are immediately told that we are not allowed in. They know that we are there to check on welfare. We discuss with the guards, who pass the message on to the managers but have no luck.

10:45 The security guard gives us the name and address of the Head Veterinarian of this region. Shortly later we drive to the office of the Head Veterinarian, Dr. Pawel Jaskiewicz on ul. Zacisce 6 street in 64200 Wolstyn.

12:00 Meet with Dr. Pawel Jaskiewicz. He has the papers of the vdBerg truck faxed to us from the slaughterhouse. On a vdBerg truck there were 5670 birds and 567 crates. This means that indeed in each crate there were 10 birds, not 9.

He explains the slaughter speed at the plant is 3000 birds per hour, so if they started unloading right away, many birds still have to wait 3-4 hours before being unloaded from the crates.

He was not sure if this waiting time in the lairage is included in the journey time, as the NVWA interprets it. We tell him we will check with the Polish CVO to inform him.

The response from the Polish CVO is clearly that the time the birds spend still in their crates, in the lairage of the slaughterhouse is included in time of travel. Therefore this journey was well gone over the maximum 12 hours without water and this truck should have been equipped with a water system.

Op 5 jun. 2013 om 16:30 heeft "Anna Hoffman"
<anna.hoffman@wetgiw.gov.pl> het volgende geschreven:

Dear Ms Steendijk (Eyes on Animals)

Referring to your questions below I would like to inform you as follows. According to the definition in art. 2 point w of the Council Regulation 1/2005 the transport includes loading and complete unloading of animals. So in case of poultry when feeding and watering of birds is impossible during transport whole operation should take no more than 12 hours.

Unloading of the poultry means not only unloading of the crates but also removal of birds from the crates.

Simultaneously the long time of waiting after arrival to the slaughterhouse is inconsistent with the provisions even if the time from loading does not exceed 12 hours as according to the point 1.2 of the annex III of Council Regulation 1099/2009 the animals shall be unloaded as quickly as possible after arrival and subsequently slaughtered without undue delay.

Kind regards,

Anna Hoffman
Animal Health and Welfare Office

*** Important for NVWA/ Dutch government inspectors***

The poultry slaughterhouse in Wolstyn, Poland is one of the closest ones to The Netherlands, as it is not that far from the German border. The other Polish slaughterhouses Dutch poultry regularly go to are all further away (further east in Poland). It is therefore necessary to check that all birds going for slaughter in Poland from The Netherlands are being transported in crates *with* access to water as the journeys always take longer than 12 hours. Unfortunately, poultry have been regularly transported from The Netherlands to Polish slaughterhouses without any water –it is most unfortunate that this has been tolerated for so long.

Violations:

The crates were not equipped with water and the journey length was 12.5 hours. Any journey above 12 hours must provide water to the birds. (The reader must keep in mind that in reality the birds spent much longer without water as the loading time was over 2 hours and the time waiting in the slaughterhouse lairage for some birds was up to 4 hours). In Poland, like in the Netherlands, the time spent loading is not including but the time waiting in the lairage of the slaughterhouse is.

As well, like with most poultry trucks seen in the EU, there was no access to the birds during transport. Thus, any bird that fell injured or sick could not be given first aid or put out of their suffering. Additionally, like with most poultry transport in Europe, the birds had insufficient ventilation above their heads when standing in a natural position.

EC 1/2005 Article 3

No person shall transport animals or cause animals to be transported in a way likely to cause injury or undue suffering to them. In addition, the following conditions shall be complied with:

(c) The means of transport are designed, constructed, maintained and operated so as to avoid injury and suffering and ensure the safety of the animals;

Annex 1 Ch I, Pt 4

When animals fall ill or are injured during transport, they shall be separated from the others and receive first-aid treatment as soon as possible. They shall be given appropriate veterinary treatment and if necessary undergo emergency slaughter or killing in a way which does not cause them any unnecessary suffering.

Annex 1 Ch II, Pt 1.1f, Pt 1.2

Sufficient space shall be provided inside the animals' compartment and at each of its levels to ensure that there is adequate ventilation above the animals when they are in a naturally standing position, without on any account hindering their natural movement.

Annex 1 Ch V, Pt 2.1a

For poultry, domestic birds and domestic rabbits, suitable food and water shall be available in adequate quantities, save in the case of a journey lasting less than:

(a) 12 hours disregarding loading and unloading time;

OF INTEREST !!

Eyes on Animals has been working with some stakeholders in the Netherlands and Belgium on developing a crate that satisfies the criteria of the EU 1/2005 – that offers ACCESS to the birds during transport and ADEQUATE VENTILATION, among other things.

We are just in the beginning phase, but recently in Turkey a team from Eyes on Animals and Animal Welfare Foundation observed a truck with spent breeding birds going for slaughter and were very impressed. There were only two columns and each crate had an access door, meaning all birds could be accessed during transport, none were prisoners to their crate. A space of about 20-25 cm was left

empty between the two columns, to allow for adequate ventilation to all birds. The birds are also loaded from the side, not from small top-doors therefore avoiding the problem of some getting their wings, feet and even head caught during loading.

This system may not be perfect or realistic yet for the EU market, but it has far more benefits than what we are using now in the EU and should be seen as a base to work from.



Access doors provide access to all birds in order to give first-aid or separate any that fall sick or injured during transport.



Having two columns with an empty space in between means much better ventilation for ALL birds and access to all (no more birds stuck in middle rows, with limited air and no access).¹

Signed: L.M

Questions: contact info@eyesonanimals.com