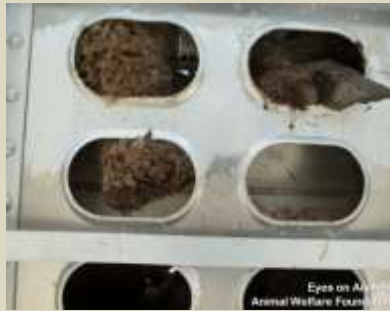


Importance of access during



trans- port



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Introduction

The European legislation protecting animals during transport, EC 1/2005, states very clearly that there must be access to animals during transport in order to inspect and care for them, and that animals that fall unfit be separated or given first-aid (see page 6 of this report for exact legislative text).

Upon first glance, the term “access” may seem rather vague and thus unimportant, but professional livestock drivers and welfare-inspectors with experience in the field both know that proper access to animals is one of the most important requirements for ensuring the welfare of the animals be maintained throughout the journey. Without easy access, the truck-driver is extremely limited in his ability to care for the animals he transports – (he cannot manually water and feed the animals, separate animals or give ones that fall sick or injured first-aid). The photos on the cover of this document were all taken in the past year showing animals that needed help. Some got help, as there were access doors on the vehicle. But sadly most did not and instead endured hours of suffering or died because no-one could access them.

This report looks into the importance of access during transport. It challenges the EU Commission and all EU Member State authorities, in particular the Dutch authorities (where Eyes on Animals is based and where the greatest number of “closed” livestock trucks are being sold and approved at the moment) for tolerating means of transport that do not provide access to animals. **It is time that the rules regarding access were made clear and enforcement of them taken seriously.**



Background

In reality, all sorts of things can go wrong during a journey. The air-conditioning or automatic ventilation system can break down. Animals can fall ill or become injured. Pregnant animals can give birth prematurely, on the truck. Without being immediately separated from the other animals, the new-born is at serious risk of becoming trampled and not reaching its mother for the vital colostrum (first milk with antibodies). The automatic water system may break down or become filthy, with animals needing instead to be watered manually. During long journeys, manual watering is necessary anyway, as individual animals cannot consume an adequate volume of water via the automatic troughs and some animals never get to the automatic nipples or troughs anyhow. If unplanned delays occur, resulting in short journeys becoming long ones, the animals need to be fed. Some animals fight on board, and when blood is drawn the aggression can escalate enormously. These animals need to be separated. All of these real-life scenarios listed above, require that the driver can easily inspect and access the animals.

The driver is held legally responsible for the welfare of the animals he transports, and if suffering is caused, he can be fined. A professional driver will also feel a moral obligation to protect the animals during the journey. It is also for these reasons, that one must give the driver an opportunity to take the right action.

Eyes on Animals is seriously alarmed at the fact that the EU Member State authorities have been approving the containers used to transport poultry and, in particular the Dutch authorities, sealed air-conditioned, as well as closed forced-ventilation trucks with tiny doors. The latter two we are seeing more and more in use by Dutch transport companies and they have even received certificates of approval from the RDW for long-distance transport. An additional problem with the latter two is also that the drivers, as well as highway police and official veterinarians, are severely restricted and sometimes fully incapable of inspecting the animals on board.



Whether it be crates or containers, access to poultry during transport throughout Europe is impossible. These types of containers and crates do not have side access doors and yet continue to be approved by Member State officials, and in use by industry throughout Europe. Sick or injured animals can never be assisted, separated or humanely killed.



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Air-conditioned trucks, like the one above, do not allow for access to all animals during transport. They do not even allow for easy inspection of the animals on board!

Closed trucks such as the one below, with forced ventilation and tiny doors, do not allow the drivers to easily inspect the animals or access the animals because the holes are too small to enter, and the frame too sharp to even lean into (see photos below).

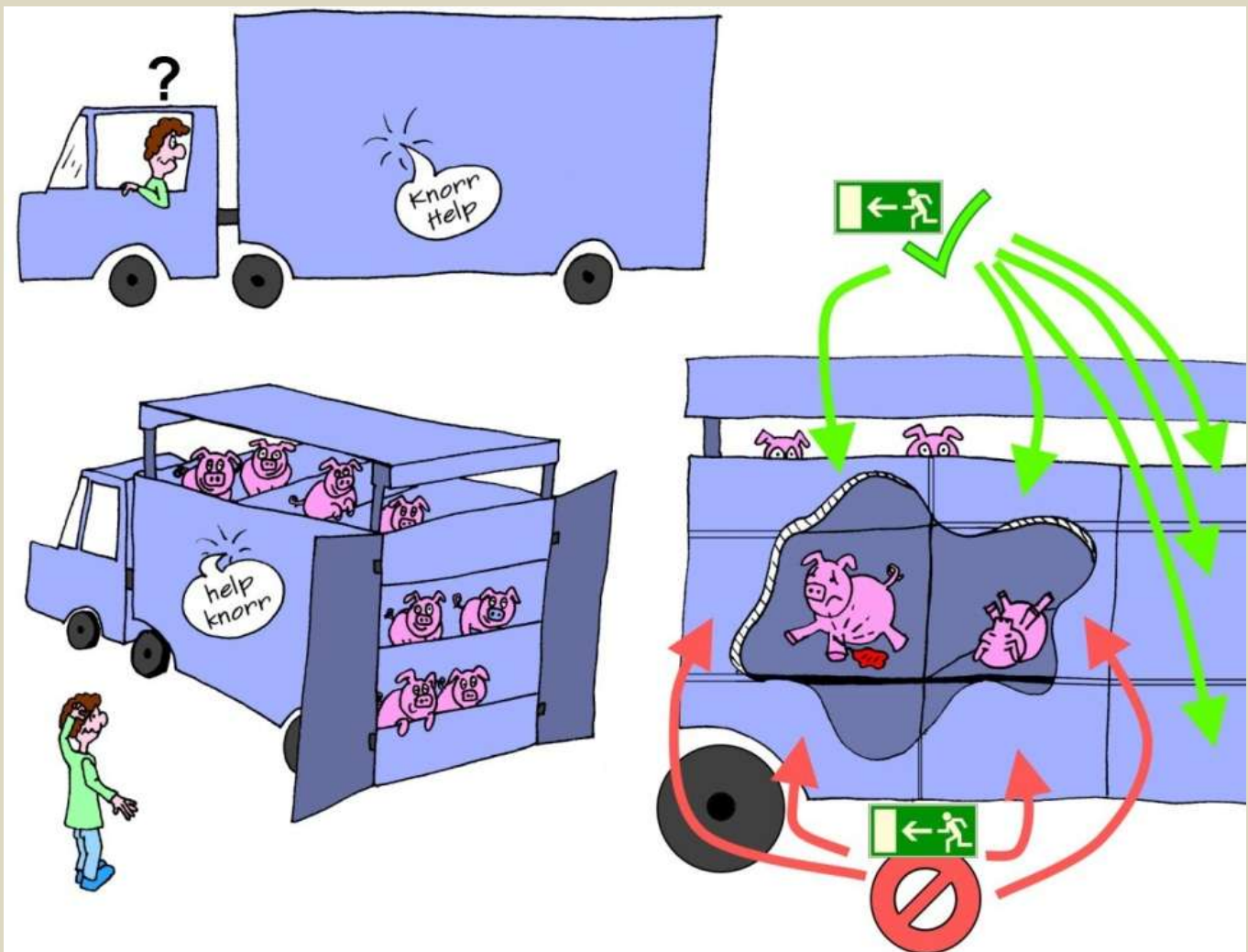


The doors are so small, that an adult cannot enter them. They are also placed high up and have a sharp-edged frame, making entrance into the truck via these doors further impossible. Even placing a manual water trough through such tiny doors is impractical.



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The makers of these closed trucks (in this case Eyes on Animals met with Berdex, NL), suggest that drivers do not need to access the animals via doors at the side as they can enter via the back-door (ramp). **BUT entering via the back-door ramp is not practical and often not even possible and should under NO circumstance be considered as an adequate form of access.** Opening the back-door ramp is often dangerous and in many situations not allowed (on the highway) or not possible (when parked on a boat, or between two other vehicles). It is also physically impossible to reach the animals at the front end of the trailer, as dividers placed throughout the truck physically block access (see diagram below). Additionally, walking through 200 slaughter-pigs or 400 sheep or 27 cattle is not only uncomfortable for the driver (pigs bite, sheep nibble, cattle head-butt, kick and can knock down a person..) but also cause extreme stress to the animals, as they cannot move away from the person walking through their confined space. Eyes on Animals does not consider access to the animals via the back ramp satisfactory because in real-life situations, it is simply not possible.



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Example of a truck without any access side-doors:



1. Injured sheep caught between floors in urgent need of help.



2. driver tries to enter the truck via the back-door ramp to release caught sheep. Sheep inside begin to panic.



3. some of the sheep jump out. Fortunately we are able to catch them from running into traffic at the BG/TR border.

Now imagine this with “slaughter” bulls or horses!

Back-door ramp CANNOT be considered as adequate access.



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Pertinent legislation regarding access

The accessibility to animals during transport is one of the most important aspects of ensuring their welfare. It allows one to inspect the animals thoroughly but also provide food, water, medical care or help for animals that fall sick or become injured during the journey. Accessibility to animals is also vital during road accidents, enabling the animals to be released quickly.

It is not without reason that the EU legislation requires access to animals during transport. The following pieces of EU legislation are all relevant to access to animals during both SHORT- and LONG-DISTANCE transport. All transporters are to respect these requirements and Member State authorities are to enforce them.

EC 1/2005 Annex 1 Ch II

1. Provisions for all means of transport.

Means of transport, containers and their fittings shall be designed, constructed, maintained and operated so as to

(f) provide access to the animals to allow them to be **inspected** and **cared** for.

EC 1/2005 Annex 1, Ch I,

4. When animals fall ill or are injured during transportation, *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.*

EC 1/2005 Article 3

General conditions for the transport of vertebrate animals.

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;



Examples of the importance of access to animals during transport

-- to help animals that have fallen sick and need first-aid



Thanks to access doors, a private veterinarian and the driver could enter the truck to treat this sick pregnant heifer of high-value from Austria (Feb 2012)



Fortunately this truck also had access-doors, allowing a private veterinarian to enter and give this young feeder from Austria with severe breathing difficulty an antibiotic injection (June 2012).



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-- to humanely kill or euthanize animals that are seriously suffering.



Access doors are vital to humanely slaughter animals on board that are seriously suffering, where there is no other quick option. On these two vehicles stuck at the Turkish border, 6 sheep were found suffering horribly. The drivers finally humanely killed them to put them out of their misery as at the time no veterinarian was available (Nov 2011).



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-- to separate newborns and give them colostrum



Often it is not known how far pregnant animals are into their gestation. Sadly, some give birth on the truck. Stress from transport can also induce premature birthing. It is vital to separate the female giving birth, so she can have some peace and comfort. It is also crucial to separate the new-born from the rest to avoid that s/he be trampled and to ensure that s/he drinks the first-milk (colostrum). On board this truck transporting pregnant sheep, 6 gave birth (November 2012).

Sadly these lambs were born on a truck without any access doors. When the driver was finally able to get to a control post to open the back ramp and unload them, they had already been trampled to death (Jan 2012).



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On board this truck, transporting expensive pregnant heifers from Austria to a third country, we found a placenta. Fortunately, the driver had been able to enter the truck to milk the cow that had just given birth and then remove the new-born calf and place him alone in a pile of straw in the swan neck. This is because both the trailer and the swan neck had access doors (February 2012).



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-- to properly inspect the animals



Access doors are vital in order to be able to thoroughly and professionally inspect the health and provide welfare of each animal.



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- -- to properly feed the animals



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-- to properly water the animals



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Q: If trucks are equipped with automatic water systems (nipples for young animals and pigs or troughs for cattle) why does one need to access the animals to give them water also manually during long-distance journeys?

A: Water nipples are just placed on one side of the truck. Automatic water troughs are often just in the corners. These automatic water systems are not adequate to guarantee that all animals get enough water for their needs because:

1. Dominant animals sometimes monopolize the water system and do not let others close to the nipples or troughs.
2. Some animals do not have the room to walk towards the nipples or troughs on the other side from where they are standing/lying.



3. Some animals (particularly young ones) do not recognize the automatic water system as being a source of water, or do not know how to use the nipples or troughs (different system to what they were used to at the farm).
4. Automatic water systems often have technical problems (not enough pressure to pump water to upper floors in the truck etc...)
5. Water system often freezes in the winter



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6. Animals that fall sick or injured during transport not able to physically move towards the water nipples or troughs, and need the water brought to them.



7. Automatic water troughs and nipples get filthy during long-distance journeys. No animal will drink from a nipple covered in manure, or a trough full of filthy bedding...



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-- by enforcing the rule that containers for small animals also have access doors, one could provide help to poultry too. So many small animals are injured and suffering inside their crates but remain helpless.



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Below are some examples of crates that we have seen with side-access doors. Why do the authorities not enforce this requirement for *all* small-animal crates, throughout Europe?



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Conclusion

The inability to access and inspect animals during transport is in contradiction to the EC 1/2005 requirements. Yet livestock vehicles and transport containers for small animals like poultry continue to be approved for short and even long-distance transport that do not allow for access or proper inspection of the animals on board. The bodyshops making these closed trailers with forced ventilation and tiny doors, or completely sealed air-conditioned trailers, are in many cases making them with good intentions- to regulate the temperature and air quality inside for the animals. But their focus is too much on engineering and state-of-the-art design, rather than on the animals and real-life scenarios in the field. By receiving approval from the government authorities, these bodyshops are unfortunately being encouraged to continue with these designs. Many livestock transport companies have spent hundreds of thousands of euros on these new closed- trailers.

A big error has been made, which will not be easy for the authorities to go back on, and yet we insist that they correct the error before more of these trailers go on the road. Without access to animals and without the ability to thoroughly inspect them, one is in clear violation of the EU legislation and is risking the welfare of animals in all cases of emergencies, big and small. It is important to remember that animals are living beings, where things can happen to them during transport. Without access to them, they are completely helpless during times of trouble in these types of trailers. The photos also show that access to animals is also crucial for enabling the drivers to provide professional basic care- like simple feeding and watering.

Eyes on Animals calls for the bodyshops to make the doors much bigger so the animals can be thoroughly and easily inspected, and so that caretakers can enter to treat, separate, handle and properly feed and water the animals inside. We also insist that the authorities will do their job as of now properly, by setting out clear instructions for what designs are acceptable or not. The design of the trailers destined to transport animals has to put priority on the animals, not on engineering.

The containers used to transport small animals must be designed with side-access doors so that injured or sick small animals can be treated, separated or humanely killed, as the EC 1/2005 legislation calls for. The plastic companies making these containers say they will make what the industry wants. But the industry will only change their demands when the authorities enforce the requirements of the EC 1/2005 and make access doors mandatory. Eyes on Animals insists that all Member State authorities responsible for approving means of transport, put this criteria into their plan-of-action so that the current containers can be phased out by the new ones.

