



The Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare

An all party group for members of both houses at Westminster formed to promote and further the cause of animal welfare by all means available to the Parliaments at Westminster and in Europe

Minutes of the Meeting 5th March 2013

LIVE TRANSPORTATION

Neil Parish MP, Roger Gale MP, Laura Sandys MP, Baroness Gale, Huw Irranca-Davies MP, Lord Bradley

LIVE TRANSPORTATION AT THE PORT OF RAMSGATE

Laura Sandys MP

When live exports started in the port of Ramsgate, I didn't know much about it but I got a crash course in the transportation of animals and have spent a lot of years getting to the bottom of different aspects of UK and EU law. It is a legal trade and everybody says we can do nothing about it; the way the trade is being managed or operated or the fact of the trade itself. However, we are not totally powerless. We are regulators and enforcers and we are the upholders of welfare standards for this particular trade.

The dramatic event last September saw 40 animals slaughtered on the side of the port in Ramsgate owing to multiple circumstances around what was going on with the transportation of animals. Within 24 hours of that incident, I was with the Minister asking for a full investigation which we got. We now have a report published yesterday. They have reviewed contingency arrangements which I was concerned about after they failed in September and also focused on effective enforcement. Trading Standards are taking some of the drivers to court and they can potentially receive 6-month prison sentences for some of the charges being put forward. We have come quite far in terms of ensuring DEFRA is focused on this trade but key issues remain.

We are still authorizing a particular operator of this trade going from Ramsgate after the breach of 30 infringements. DEFRA has the right under Clause 22 of the Welfare of Animals Order 2006 to suspend or amend any authorisation or approval or certificate of competence for an operator. How many more infringements must occur before the Department can invoke the powers that it has? If there was one thing I would be hopeful that APGAW could look at is at what point DEFRA decides what constitutes a fit and proper operator of this trade and take action if it does not? The NFU are proud of their members and how they manage animal welfare so it is extremely sad in the case of Ramsgate to have a situation where infringement is allowed to continue occurring and authorization is still issued.

Neil Parish MP– It is a legal trade but of course there is has to be the necessary regulation to ensure welfare is observed at all times. I agree that it is important to look at whether DEFRA is not inspecting enough and whether the rules are not being followed. I will speak to the Minister about this too.

Laura Sandy MP - Thank you to this group for taking this on and for Neil taking this on. It is important to speak about this in this forum and to have open discussion.

Gavin Grant (Chief Executive RSPCA)

I would like to put on record the RSPCA's thanks and appreciation of Laura Sandys as she has been a doughty campaigner and to Roger Gale and to Thanet Council for their invitations for our officers to be present in the Port of Ramsgate which they own. There are a series of important matters but clearly for the record the RSPCA thinks there

Marisa Heath, Secretariat

Tel: 07736 899 547 E-mail: admin@apgaw.org Website: www.apgaw.org

should be an 8 hour limit on travel, slaughter should take place as close to the farm or market as possible and ultimately that there is no real need for this trade. We have reservations on 3 facets of this trade and all 3 are subject for an application for Judicial Review of DEFRA Animal Health and thereby definition the Secretary of State. First is the nature of inspections undertaken by Animal Health on behalf of taxpayers of this country in accordance with the regulations. We met the Minister of Agriculture, David Heath MP, with Laura and his distress at what had occurred was clear. I was advised that supervised loadings would now be in place following intervention of the Minister. Since the resumption of the trade, there have been further incidents at the Port of Ramsgate which allude to concerns we still have. It is apparent there are defects in vehicles en-route to Ramsgate and it begs the question of whether supervised loading would pick up lack of care and attention on those vehicles. Several issues relating to drinking systems and fan cooling systems have arisen which are clearly important. Such mechanism of inspection at point of departure can be subject to failure and they need to be inspected at the port itself. Regrettably, the haulers are taking every effort they can to frustrate attempts by RSPCA officers to inspect the animal welfare of the creatures on board these trucks at the ports rather than working with us.

Second, the port itself is a problem as it lacks the adequate provision of facilities in accordance with emergency contingency plans as demonstrated on 12th September. That raises a problem and the timeline in Appendix 1 of the report highlights that problem.

Third is the transportation vessel itself. It is a small open-decked, with no protection, ship that is not fit for purpose. This vessel is currently subject to refitting but there are duties and obligations around animal health to ensure welfare of animals on that vessel which it cannot possibly meet.

Another matter is the fate of these animals once they leave the shores. A small part of the trade is calves which may end up in veal crates that are illegal in the EU. What we do know from trails of these vehicles is that many end up at abattoirs outside of Paris. A statement of fact in France is some 70% of slaughter of meat for human consumption is the subject of religious slaughter. Under provisions of EU law there is an exemption which allows for that slaughter without pre-stunning. Yet only 4-5% of the population is of a faith that requires that method so this 70% does not tally. These animals suffer the misery of the trip across the channel and they then suffer a fate the vast majority of people would find unacceptable with this method of slaughter.

Meurig Raymond (Deputy President NFU)

I am a farmer in West Wales, with a farm of 3000 acres with dairy cows, beef cattle and sheep flock. Livestock farming has been in difficulty for a number of years and it is important we add value to our stocks. As we have seen over the last 6 weeks on the horsemeat scandal, it is important that the farming industry is profitable and can invest in the future to increase production and prevent poor quality sources coming in.

Most farmers would like to slaughter livestock as close to the farm as possible. It is not as simple as saying slaughter at the nearest abattoir as you build up relationships with abattoirs and produce a specification of animal destined for a market. Certain abattoirs only kill lamb or beef on a certain day of the week. There has to be flexibility. None of us want to put our livestock under stress as you lose value, particularly if paid on deadweight once the animal has been slaughtered. I would suggest less than 1% of the animals are sent for live transportation. It needs to be looked at in perspective.

It is important we have access to legitimate markets and the trade must operate within the law. Live exports are part of the Single Market and I am proud of the way our industry operates as far as livestock is concerned.

Frank Langrish (NFU farmer & haulier)

I am a sheep and cattle farmer and I also run a livestock transport business. I buy livestock from Dutch and Belgium companies at times and am aware of the demand for British livestock. That demand is much more specific today than it used to be and there is a potential market for half a million sheep. There is only a small demand for veal calves which is of less interest owing to Bovine TB. The price premium to sell overseas is 15-25% over the UK price.

The type of vehicles used for over 8 hour cross border journeys are sophisticated costing around £500k each and drivers have to go through specific training programmes to obtain a qualification before they can drive. The animal welfare is crucial throughout any journey as they are high value animals. The shortest route is the best route so the logic is to go back to Dover and work with the main stream ferry companies which only take animals for breeding currently. We are stuck with an outdated boat which is not satisfactory and I think the animal welfare organisations should support our endeavours to get the animals to travel in the fastest possible way which is by Dover.

Peter Garbutt (NFU Chief Livestock Advisor)

To maintain a productive livestock industry it is imperative that we move animals around. This particular operation in Ramsgate is very closely scrutinized and for it to work in the future, standards must be right and enforcement must be right. If Government cut backs means not enough resources for animal health, it must be made available as it is crucial. Transport standards are harmonized across the EU. The September incident involved a French truck and maybe we should look at whether other EU countries are meeting the same standards that we ask for.

Philip LyMBERG (Chief Executive Compassion in World Farming)

I would like to thank Laura Sandys and Thanet Council for all their work on this issue. CIWF believes there should be a total maximum journey time of no more than 8 hours. We feel that live animal export trade is both unnecessary in business terms and for the suffering of animals. Sheep exports amount to less than 1% - 0.5% of total sheep slaughter from the British industry. The number of calves has fallen from half a million in the 1990s to several thousand a year in modern times. CIWF welcomes DEFRA's statement and report following the appalling incident and we welcome recommendation on tightening enforcement procedure.

Everything possible must be done to end the live exports of calves as some British calves are travelling up to 19 hours to Spain. There have been Spanish reports saying British calves are not as robust as local calves but no wonder considering the journey. I welcome the efforts made by all stakeholders involved in diary calf trade; CIWF, RSPCA and NFU together with retailers, the diary sector and ministerial input has seen calf exports radically reduced. Companies like Tesco and Asda have had to put in place supply chain solutions so calves are reared on British farms to British standards rather than veal farms abroad.

CIWF would like to see more being done at the loading end, DEFRA taking a key role in bringing different parts of the debate together and by pressing the EU for a maximum journey time for 8 hours. We believe the cost of regulating trade should not be borne by the taxpayer but by the trade itself.

Neil Parish MP - We can agree that we prefer animals to be kept and slaughtered here in the UK. However, we do realize that animals need to travel and that legally they can so we must ensure it is done in the best way possible. The point was made about the lorries not being properly inspected which is important. What is the situation with safe handling at the port? If there is a problem what do you do about containing animals safely?

Frank Langrish - The trucks have to be certified as being suitable for over 8 hours and they are inspected every 5 years. Faults are reported to the Animal Health team. There were safe containment facilities in Kent but many closed down. In the September incident there was a written contingency plan with premises 45 minutes away from the dock where the animals could have been unloaded safely. On the issue of inspections before animals are loaded, I think every exporter would welcome that. Before a health certificate is issued, the animals are inspected by a veterinarian and the journey is also logged with that. The measures are there if they are policed correctly.

Huw Irranca-Davies MP – You said it was an outdated boat yet also that it is not in the interests of the farmers to have substandard transport. In previous infringements there have been issues with lorry transporters where welfare considerations have been picked up on en-route. Does this not suggest the procedure is not working well and the transportation not fit for purpose?

Frank Langrish – The correct way of transporting should be in a large freight boat but at the moment it is a small company who has spent money setting it up because there is enough value for them to make a profit. But yes we

should be using a shorter route on mainstream ferries which are more suitable. However, the animal rights groups have lobbied the ferry companies to stop the transport of live animals.

Gavin Grant– That is incorrect. The ferry companies have chosen themselves not to take the trade. Regarding the September incident, Page 5 of Appendix 1 in the report set out that the veterinary surgeon agreed that the vehicle was not suitable to move the sheep to the contingency premises and therein is exactly the point. There have been faults found consistently including with the shipping vessel.

Philip LyMBERy – In terms of assurance for vehicle specification, I would remind the committee of Laura Sandys stating that trade through Ramsgate was one of the most scrutinised in the EU but despite that there has been in excess of 30 breaches of the regulation through that port.

Neil Parish MP–We need to ensure it is carried out with the right lorries and that they are in the right condition. If they are expensive lorries then that must be the case. The animals must be properly inspected and safe containment facilities must be near to the port for it to work and to be available for use in emergency procedures.

Merig Raymond – Whilst I have been to abattoirs in Holland and Belgium where it was high quality, there are examples where the standards are very low. If the buyers are not allowed to buy from the UK, they will go to Romania and Eastern Europe where welfare is far lower. On the shipment issue, we have spoken to the ferry companies and there has been intimidation of them to stop them taking cargoes of livestock.

Baroness Masham – The sheep are packed into the vehicles so how do they get to the water?

Frank Langrish - Sheep do not drink very much and the density is covered by the regulations so they have room to move. When you unload a sheep the first thing it does is eat not drink.

Neil Parish MP– What about the temperature of the lorry?

Frank Langrish – Of course airflow is critical and covered regulation too.

Huw Irranca-Davies MP – There is still the issue of the inadequacy of the inspection routine. Many Parliamentary Questions have shown a number of infringements, sometimes en-route as has been mentioned. Some infringements can be attributed to repeat offenders so what are the thoughts on whether we should be more stringent on offenders who make a number of mistakes. It is significant in terms of the reputation of the industry so should it not be tackled better?

Frank Langrish – Absolutely yes. Some infringements are minor but I support anything that is major simply leading to the prevention of that operator being able to carry out such processes. It should all be judged by the vet who is the qualified person to say whether animals are in good condition on preloading. Vets should be doing the inspections.

Pete Garbutt – I think it is important to make the point that enforcement is often on foreign registered trucks. This leads to the question of whether there a failure of cross border liaison which needs to be looked at?

Neil Parish MP – When I was in the EU parliament I suggested all you needed to do was seize the lorry under enforcement until they put it right or stopped carrying out the trade. They are expensive lorries and it wouldn't take long to get that message through. I think that should be looked at here.

Dermot Murphy (RSPCA Inspector)– A lot of the problem is down to the enforcement and not having plans in place to deal with problems when they arise. I made it clear with the Animal Health team that they should see the RSPCA inspectors as additional resources. Clearly the facility in Ramsgate was not what it needed to be and emergency plans failed. The Animal Health team may not deal fully with minor to medium infringements as it is easier to let the journey continue.

Neil Parish MP – It is very clear that we need to get fit for purpose lorries, vets inspecting animals on to and off the lorries. I will take the points you have raised today to the Minister and together with Laura will press for better enforcement. I will also write to Thanet Council thanking them for all their good work.

HORSE MEAT SCANDAL AND LIVE TRANSPORTATION

Roly Owers Chief Executive & Hannah Lynch - World Horse Welfare

Roly Owers - Whilst some have asked where the horsemeat come from, we have known for some time that the transport of horses around Europe is largely unregulated and was going to lead to problems. We have transport regulations allowing limitless journeys for horses and also we have the Tripartite Agreement allowing free movement between the Republic of Ireland, France and UK. Within this are huge health and welfare issues to all of the horse population across Europe recognized by the equine sector and within the transportation there are links to criminality so it needs to be addressed.

Hannah Lynch - Our field investigations at the end of last month revealed poor compliance with transport regulation. We saw horses with fresh injuries at rest stops where they were not given any water, tiny amounts of food and transported very quickly with no measures taken to deal with the injury. In one case the drivers said they were under orders to drive from Poland to the South of Italy within 20 hours which by our calculations would require 54mph with no stops at all. The paperwork would have looked ok and so anyone undertaking enforcement would not have known the bad conditions in which these horses had been transported. A foal at market was drenched in sweat owing to stress and poor ventilation despite it being very cold weather. Its water trough was empty and it had no food whilst it stood for 9 hours before the vehicle even left for its journey.

As well as limited travel time and better enforcement we advocate the need for better labelling as we have seen horsemeat is labelled as beef. Customers are denied the chance to make informed decisions.

Roly Owers– The passport equine identification is not working and needs a radical overhaul. We are pushing for it to underpin the system as it needs to be effective as that is vital for enforcement. The solutions are 9 – 12 hour journey time, enforcement, guidance and training needs to be better, to restrict the Tripartite Agreement and for country of origin labelling. Food labelling needs to cover horses.

Neil Parish MP – I think the minister needs to lobby for stricter conditions across the EU and to really look at whether conditions are being administered effectively. Under our own control is the Tripartite Agreement which the Minister is looking at and APGAW should push to ensure it is only genuine horses being used for racing and breeding that are coming through on that.

Huw Irunca-Davis MP - What was wrong with the previous equine database?

Roly Owers – It was not all bad but the quality of data on the database was not great. There are lots of dead horses on there, lots of duplicates. Compliance is also a problem with horse owner and vets. There is a place for the humane slaughter of horses in this country as long as you also deal with breeding so that it doesn't become an endless circle.

Faye Stacey (Ponies for You) – We have found ponies going to markets and ending up being transported across Europe in lorries that are not suitable and are not checked by vets as they are travelling out as meat with no regulation. The Tripartite Agreement states 'high value' horses which can be used to mean any horse except those going for slaughter. However, dealers do not specifically send them for slaughter, they send them on spec to see what they can get and then send them for slaughter. There are lots of loopholes which are being used and are having a negative impact on horses.

Neil Parish MP – APGAW will certainly continue to push the need for the Tripartite Agreement to be amended as we have already raised this with the Minister. Perhaps we can draw together a briefing paper that I can formally issue to the Minister and other MPs highlighting all the problems we have discussed.