

Cold weather guidance for transporters and organisers of live animal transport by road

Environmental conditions created by extreme cold temperatures can be a significant and serious stressor during the transport process. It is the legal responsibility of transporters to safeguard the welfare of animals and ensure they are not subject to unnecessary suffering.

Actions to take

There are key actions that should be taken to minimise the effects of thermal stress due to cold weather:

- **Planning ahead** - Before the journey starts you should:
 - check conditions along the whole of the intended route as snow and freezing temperatures will inevitably cause disruption to the transport networks
 - check and prepare the vehicle and all equipment
 - if your journey relies on another means of transport, contact the relevant ferry, rail or airline company to obtain up to date information regarding any potential delays to services.
 - Delay the journey until there are warmer temperatures
- **Contingency plans:**
 - should be in place for every journey, and are particularly important in cold conditions as delays, which might be relatively insignificant under normal conditions, can become critical very quickly.
 - drivers must be familiar with and able to implement contingency plans which should detail who to contact in an emergency, where to obtain water and feed, location of control posts, recognition of signs of cold stress and
 - appropriate action to be taken including access to veterinary support if required.
- **Vehicle requirements:**
 - the vehicle may require heating prior to loading, this can be achieved by closing ventilation apertures and using space heaters
 - during the journey ventilation apertures may need to be adjusted to minimise impact of wind chill whilst maintaining adequate air movement
 - curtains should be in use when transporting poultry and the birds must not be wet
 - watering systems must be kept fully functioning and prevented from freezing. enough water must be carried on the vehicle for the number of animals being transported and the length of the journey
 - if fitted, the vehicle temperature monitoring system must be fully functioning and checked regularly during the journey to ensure temperature is being maintained

at a level suitable for the species being transported. Where the alert system issues a warning, the driver must take immediate action to safeguard animal welfare.

- **On the Journey:**

- additional suitable bedding may be added to increase thermal comfort
- it may be necessary to feed the animals during the journey to improve their ability to cope with low temperatures.
- reduce space allowance if animals have more than the minimum allowed

- **Increased checks:**

- prior to loading and during the journey animals should be inspected more frequently for signs of cold stress and emergency action taken if necessary
- signs of cold stress include lethargy, shivering and huddling.

It is the responsibility of authorised transporters to ensure that any compromise to animal welfare is minimised and that unnecessary suffering does not occur.

Where incidents of unnecessary suffering caused by transporting animals in extreme weather are identified, DAERA will take appropriate regulatory action which may include the suspension of transporter authorisations and or prosecution.