

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

Exposure to high temperatures and humidity is a major threat to animal welfare during transport. Failure to take account of high temperatures can cause suffering to animals and, in the worst-case scenario, death.

Humidity can significantly increase the adverse effects of high temperatures on animals and cause greater suffering. One of the several mechanisms that animals use to cool themselves in hot weather is the loss of water vapour by sweating or panting. In high humidity, the loss of water vapour is reduced. In conditions of both high temperature and high humidity, animals may be subject to further heat stress.

If you do not have a temperature-controlled vehicle, you should not transport animals if the temperature is over 30°C.

Actions to take

There are key actions that can be taken to minimise the effects of heat stress due to hot weather. Actions include but are not limited to:

- **Planning (all species):**
 - avoid travelling in the hotter parts of the day
 - travel early in the morning or overnight where possible
 - park in the shade whenever possible, ideally with the vehicle positioned perpendicular to any prevailing wind if open sided.
 - plan journeys very carefully in order to avoid any delay, especially at border crossings.
- **Contingency plans:**
 - should be in place for every journey and are particularly important in hot conditions as delays 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, location of emergency facilities to offload, recognition of signs of heat stress and appropriate action to be taken including access to veterinary support if required.
- **Vehicle requirements (all species):**
 - Ventilation systems must be fully functioning and turned on when vehicle is parked.
 - Watering systems must be fully functioning, and enough water 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 (all species):**
 - inspect animals more frequently for signs of heat stress (e.g. open mouth breathing; high respiration rate; sweating) and know what emergency action to take if necessary
 - provide water or electrolyte solutions more frequently
 - minimise the number of stops
 - minimise the time spent on the trailer.
- **Poultry:**
 - if the weather forecast predicts extreme temperatures at any point during the journey, the transport should not take place
 - catching operations and transport should occur at night or in coolest parts of the day
 - make sure the loading area is protected from bright sun
 - leave some crates/containers empty to stimulate air flow
 - reduce stocking density, in particular in containers placed at hot spots (front end of the truck)
 - if a delay in loading occurs, ventilation must be provided for the birds either by unloading the crates into a cool and well-ventilated place (for example, back in the shed) or by driving the vehicle around
 - a fully loaded vehicle should never be allowed to stand for any length of time on site at the farm, during the journey, or at the slaughterhouse unless in a suitably and efficiently ventilated lairage.
- **Livestock and horses:**
 - in extreme heat, we recommend that the stocking density should be reduced by at least 30% to maximise airflow
 - increase headroom above animals to maximise ventilation and air movement in the vehicle
 - Make sure that there is enough space for all animals to regulate their body temperatures. Animals will overheat if packed together too tightly.
 - avoid penning animals in the hotter parts of the vehicle, these are located at the front end and higher levels of the vehicle.

It is the responsibility of authorised transporters to ensure that any compromise to 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.