Impact of EC Regulation on Animal Protection during Transport in Romania – some Aspects

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Abstract
The aim of this study was to assess the efficiency of application of EC Regulation 1/2005 and national legislation in the area of animal protection during transport in our country. Short or long distance of animal transport done often in poor conditions can produce suffering of the animal involved. EU and national legislation in the field, wanted that suffering being minimized or even missing. A Commission report on animal transport Regulation showed that current legislation applicable from 2007 made some improvements in this area but it is still far from satisfactory especially in terms of time journey in relation with travel conditions (means of transport construction, microclimate and methods of loading/unloading, supplies of food and water, stop for watering, feeding and rest). The study was based on answers given by drivers and attendants of animals involved in transport to some questions in the field. Results showed that livestock transporters lined to current legislation requirements thus ensuring the protection and animal welfare. This was due both proper equipping vehicles, especially long-term transport and training of the drivers and attendants of animals in order to obtain the Certificate of competence.

Keywords: animal protection, transport, legislation

1. Introduction
Road livestock transport is performed on a large scale both within the European area and between Europe and third party countries. Until now the existing statistics have shown a significant increase in number of animals transported across Europe between 2005 and 2009. Thus the number of animals transported by vehicles increased significantly up to 70% in pigs, 8% in cattle, 3% in sheep and only horse transports decreased by 17 %.

Two thirds of the animals transported were the subject of short term transportation – less than eight hours, while 4 % of transports had a duration longer than the maximum period allowed, requiring mandatory breaks [1].

Currently we know that during transport animals are subject to stress combination factors that lead to a decrease of their welfare levels, ranging from animal movement method, means of transport construction, drivers conduct while in traffic to animals, unloading upon arrival at destination. This fact has been stated in the scientific reports of the European Food Safety Authority [2].

In the past years developing and drafting the legislation on animal protection at the European level aimed to increase animal welfare levels during transport, namely European Council’s Directive 95/29 from June 1995 on animal protection during transport and later the European Council’s Regulation (CE) no.1/2005 regarding animal protection during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/CEE and 93/119/CE, Regulation (CE) no. 1.255/97 as well as national legislation such as SVNAFS Ordinance no.83/2006 to approve the Sanitary – Veterinary Norms on securing animal welfare

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conditions during transport and SVNAFS Ordinance no.201/2007 regarding the issuance procedure of Certificate of professional competence for drivers and attendants on vehicles that transport livestock [3,4,5]. The aim of this study was to assess the efficiency of application of EC Regulation 1/2005 and national legislation on animal protection during transport in our country.

2. Materials and methods

According to European and national legislation drivers and attendants to animal transport must be in possession of a Certificate of professional competence granted upon graduation of a training programme on livestock transport. This training programme is organised in our country by authorised institutions and the obtained certificate is valid for five years. Possession of the Certificate of professional competence for our country is mandatory starting January the 5th 2008. The curricula of these training programmes is designed based on the European Council’s Regulations 1/2005/ regarding animal protection during transport and connection operations and amending Directives 64/432/CEE and 93/119/CE as well as Regulation 1255/97/CE.

Study

Drivers and animal attendants (n: 335) working on vehicles that transport animals, employees of transport companies or authorized juridical entities that undertook short or long term journeys were taken into consideration.

Assessment questionnaire

Each participant attending the course was handed in a questionnaire related to: distance travelled sufficient space, injury and mortality rate upon unloading, unloading time, usefulness of knowledge acquired, and other questions that are not the subject of this study.

The questionnaires were completed by both participants attending the course: for the first time (five years ago - 2007) and for the second time in order to renew their Certificate (2012). They are part of the five consecutive series attending these courses in order to obtain the Certificate of professional competence.

Statistical processing

The data obtained by processing the questionnaires (n: 670) were statistically analyzed (IBM SPSS Statistics), thus being able to highlight the efficiency of enforcing the applicable current legislation on animal protection and welfare during transport.

3. Results and discussion

In our country, animal transport requirements during analysed period were on average 62.35% for chickens, 12.94% for pigs, 19.9% for cattle and sheep and 4.76% for other species.

Having processed the answers to the survey questions we have found that the majority of journeys were short (73.02%), and the long duration ones were taken both in the country as well as in Europe and third party countries - 26.98%, (Figure 1).

Both during short term transport (up to 8 hour trips) and long term transport (over 8 hour trips) animal protection and welfare must be ensured.

Figure 1. Way of journey (%) during the study

The answers provided by the interviewees have indicated that loading surface in short term animal transport was ensured to the maximum for 64.4% of the animals transported (Figure 2) and to the minimum for 28.57% of the animals and for 7.8% of the animals transported loading surface criterion was not met. Study results on this matter have highlighted an improvement compared to the period prior to applying the pertaining legislation and driver participation in training programmes, by 7.7% for the maximum loading surface ($p \geq 0.05$). Minimum loading surface ensured improved by 3.3% compared to the previous period, while lack of providing such surface has bed considerably reduced (11%) compared to the period prior to drivers participation in the organised training programmes ($p \leq 0.05$).
Of most importance we have considered to be the answers of 86% of participants who have stated that these training programmes were useful to their following activity while only 14% of them have stated the programmes did not help them in any way \( (p \leq 0.001, \text{Figure 3}) \).

As a result of the knowledge acquired 91.7% of the respondents have affirmatively answered the question on reducing lesion and mortality rate upon arrival at destination with animals transported, thus confirming once more the importance of attending such training programmes \( (p \leq 0.001) \). These participants have confirmed through their answers the fact that they have understood the implications of transport in animal welfare.

4. Conclusions

During the five years over which the rules stipulated by the Regulation on animal protection during transport were applied certain conditions related to animal protection and welfare have improved, such as: ensuring loading surface, transport duration, lesion and mortality rate upon arrival at destination. Organising the programmes to train drivers and animal attendants, although enforced by current legislation proved to be a practical necessity in ensuring animal welfare during transport.

In what concerns the drivers, the lack of knowledge related to animal protection and welfare ensuring transport may lead to a low welfare level in animals transported due to their conduct while participating in traffic but it is not limited to this alone.

References