

Extreme Hot Weather Guidance for Transporters and Organisers of live animal transport by sea

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.

As an authorised transporter, once the owner/driver has left the vehicle, your company has a responsibility to safeguard the welfare of animals onboard the vessel and ensure that they are not subject to unnecessary suffering.

Animals should not be transported in temperatures over 30 degrees Celsius. If humidity is high, then the ‘feels like’ temperature should also be taken into consideration.

Actions to take

Measures should be taken onboard the vessel to safeguard the welfare of the animals and minimise the risk of injury or unnecessary suffering due to exposure to high temperatures and humidity.

Whilst it is acknowledged that prior to loading, you do not have control of the temperature within a passenger’s vehicle, the temperature within the car deck will become a contributory factor whilst the vehicle is on-board the vessel.

Actions to take include but are not limited to:

- provision of an area out of direct sunlight where vehicles can be parked prior to loading to assist with keeping the internal temperature within the vehicle to a minimum
- regular inspections of the forced ventilation system on decks to ensure it is fully operational
- ensure that all vehicles known to be transporting animals are clearly identifiable and loaded in an area with maximum ventilation and out of direct sunlight
- ensure that the vehicles transporting animals have windows/ventilation apertures open
- increased deck patrols to inspect animals and/or facilitation of access by owners/transporters
- ensure that owners/transporters have water available for the animals during the sea crossing
- ensure that staff are made aware of the company’s obligations under the legislation and are fully aware of operational procedures.

Contingency plans should be in place for every crossing and are particularly important in hot conditions as delays can become critical very quickly. Operational staff 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, recognition of signs of heat stress and appropriate action to be taken including access to veterinary support if required.

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, APHA will take appropriate regulatory action which may include the suspension of transporter authorisations. The Local Authority will be notified and will consider any appropriate enforcement action.