

## VETERINARY BORDER CONTROL IS A KEY FACTOR IN THE TRANSPORT LOGISTICS OF COMPANION ANIMALS

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### Abstract

This paper is devoted to the specific transport of companion animals. There are issues to be resolved regarding animal transportation and the logistics process related to commercial and non-commercial transport. General requirements for the movement of pet animals within the Union have proved to be an unjustified administrative burden and cost. Specific rules should therefore apply differently to the commercial and non-commercial movement of pet animals within the Union. The paper presents the difference between non-commercial and commercial transport of companion animals. The paper's main goal is to present the veterinary border control as a key factor in ensuring that both live animals and animal products entering the EU are safe and meet the strictly harmonized import conditions laid down in the Union legislation [1].

**Keywords:** Transport, animals, legislation, Border Control Posts

### 1. INTRODUCTION

For centuries, mainly dogs and cats were considered pets, but in today's modern times, the list of these animals is enlarged. In terms of legislation, we also include, for example, ferret, rabbit, ornamental fish and other animals. Keeping pets at home, both indoors and outdoors, for purely private purposes generally presents a lower health risk than other forms of keeping or moving animals on a larger scale, especially those kept in agriculture, animal shelters and animal transport. General requirements for the movement of pet animals within the Union have proved to be an unjustified administrative burden and cost. Specific rules should therefore apply differently to the commercial and non-commercial movement of pet animals within the Union.

Why do we export and relocate live animals? Many justifications are given for exporting live animals. Every year, billions of animals are overcrowded in ships, trucks, cars, trains on their way to slaughter, new owners, breeders etc. Many animals succumb to stress and disease and die before reaching their destination. Journeys across countries are long, and sometimes it can be over a month. Live animal export has many repercussions that have a long-lasting negative impact on animals, humans, and the environment [2].

Commercial transportation in Europe is regulated by the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005, which regulates the maximum journey time in the different species. A consignment of live animals or animal products can only enter the EU if it has satisfactorily undergone the specific checks, and Common Health Entry Documents (CHED) are issued from TRACES (Trade Control and Expert System).

The paper's main goal is to present the veterinary border control as a key factor in ensuring that both live animals and animal products entering the EU are safe and meet the strictly harmonized import conditions laid down in the Union legislation [3].

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methods of scientific investigation and writing procedures was used in the work, with the theoretical writing procedure playing the most important role. Analytical and comparative methods, are used as part of this procedure to clarify the issue. Methods of transporting live animals were analysed and compared. The currently valid European legislation regarding the transport and border veterinary control of animals was reviewed. We used the information that came from annual reports provided by the Slovak Republic's State Veterinary and Food Administration, literary sources, and websites, for analyses.

## 3. NON-COMMERCIAL VS COMMERCIAL TRANSPORT

What is the difference between non-commercial and commercial transport? Non-commercial transport is when you travel with your pet to any country, while commercial is when the pets travel with their keeper to be sold or transferred to a new owner [4].

Non-commercial transport:

- Pet owners or an authorized person must accompany the pet during the journey.
- If the pet is travelling unaccompanied, pet owners must travel to the destination EU member country five days earlier or five days later than the pet transport.)
- When the dog or cat reaches the destination country, they are not intended for sale or transfer to another owner.
- The number of pets must not exceed five during a single movement. The number of pets travelling can be more than five only if the travel is to participate in a show, competition or sporting event. The pet parent has to submit written evidence to prove the same.

Commercial transport:

- The dog or cat travels to be sold or transferred to a new owner in the destination EU country.
- The number of dogs and cats accompanying a keeper is more than five.
- The dog or cat travels more than five days earlier or later than the pet owner or keeper.
- Pets that travel within commercial transport require a health certificate endorsed by an authorized government official within 48 hours of the pet's travel date.

Movements for commercial purposes are not limited to the immediate exchange of money for goods or services. It is related to economic activity and directly or indirectly aims to achieve financial gain [5].

Less strict rules for movement can be accepted when animals accompany their owner and if a maximum of five animals are transported simultaneously. More than five pets may accompany the owner to ensure that pets do not present a significant risk of spreading transmissible diseases. Those rules are provided in Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law') [6].

Long-distance transportation is a welfare concern because it may cause animal sickness or death. Commercial transportation in Europe is regulated by the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005, which regulates the maximum journey time in the different species. After this time, animals must be unloaded for resting, watering and feeding at control posts where Official Veterinarians have to check their health [7].

A consignment of live animals or animal products can only enter the EU if it has satisfactorily undergone the specific checks, and Common Health Entry Documents (CHED) are issued from TRACES (Trade Control and Expert System). TRACES is a centralized database which allows monitoring of live animals and animal products checked at the Border Control Posts (BSPs). It may automatically exchange data on import controls

with customs authorities. The European Commission's online platform for sanitary and phytosanitary certification required for importing animals, animal products, food and feed of non-animal origin and plants into the European Union and the intra-EU and EU exports of animals and certain animal products.

#### **4. BORDER VETERINARY CONTROL – BORDER CONTROL POSTS (BCPS)**

Veterinary border control is key in ensuring that both live animals and animal products entering the EU are safe and meet the strictly harmonized import conditions laid down in the Union legislation. The imported live animals and animal products present the highest risks as they can transmit serious human and animal pathogens, causing diseases. Therefore, it is necessary to have the specific controls at their entry point, which are called Border Control Posts (BCPs) [1].

A Border Control Post is an inspection post designated and approved in line with EU legislation for carrying out checks on animals and animal products arriving from other EU countries and third countries at the EU border. These checks are carried out to protect animal and public health and animal welfare. It is a key factor to ensure that the live animals and products of animal origin entering the European Union is safe and meet the specific import conditions laid down in the Community legislation.

While entering the country, the inspectors of BCPs must provide mandatory inspections, including a documentary, identification, and physical inspection to verify that animals and animal products comply with their certificates and meet the import conditions. In the case of animal products, a reduction of a physical check is applied, which may include picking of laboratory sampling.

If the consignment has satisfactorily passed these inspections, a common veterinary entry document (CVED) is issued, which allows the products to be released for free circulation. There is close cooperation between the veterinary and customs authorities at this level. They will not allow the release of animals and animal products unless the CVED is issued and signed by a veterinary inspector. In 2020 a total of 2026 consignments of animal products and 45 consignments of animals were imported from third countries to the Slovak Republic.

In the Slovak Republic, only approved stations can provide such control. The divisions are as follows:

- Vysne Nemecke:
  - Inspection Centre for Animals – “U” ungulates, registered “E” horses, “O” remaining animals
  - Inspection Centre for Animal Products – inspection of animal products intended and not intended for human consumption, including selected products of plant origin, at a low frequency per year (all temperature modes).
- Cierna nad Tisou:
  - Inspection Centre for Animal Products – inspection of animal products intended and not intended for human consumption, including selected products of plant origin, at a low frequency per year (all temperature modes).
- Bratislava – Airport
  - Inspection Centre for Animals – registered "E" horses, "O" remaining animals.
  - Inspection Centre for Animal Products – inspection of animal products intended and not intended for human consumption, including selected products of plant origin, at a low frequency per year (all temperature modes).

##### **3.1. Control of pet animals in the Slovak Republic**

List of entry points for pet animals in the framework of non-commercial contact on entry from third countries:

- Road border crossing: Vysne Nemecke, Ubla, Velke Slemence

- Railway border crossing: Cierna nad Tisou
- Airports: Bratislava, Kosice, Poprad, Zilina, Piestany, Sliac

Information obtained by Custom offices during 2020 (**Table 1**).

- Bratislava – 25 transport vehicles controlled, 28 pet animals identified (20 cats, 8 dogs) without deficiencies,
- Cierna nad Tisou – 9 transport vehicles controlled, 9 pet animals identified,
- Vysne Nemecke – 405 transport vehicles controlled, 745 pet animals identified,
- Ubla - 194 transport vehicles controlled, 194 pet animals identified,
- Velke Slemence – 66 passports (veterinary certificates) for pet animals controlled. In 4 cases, the pet animals were not allowed to cross the border due to the lack of deficiencies in the passports,
- Michalovce - 674 transport vehicles controlled, 1014 pet animals identified. In 4 cases, the pet animals were not allowed to cross the border due to the lack of deficiencies in the passports.

In 2020, there was no case of returning the pet animals during non-commercial movement due to not submitted veterinary certificates. Only 8 cases of irregularity were recorded.

In 2020, the 3358 certificates were issued to third countries. Out of these 1704 certificates were for live animals and germinal products, 1654 certificates were issued for animal products. All deficiencies found during spot-check inspections had to be removed before the certification occurred.

Controls during the transport are carried out in cooperation with the Police of the Slovak Republic.

**Table 1** Controls of pet animals during transport

Control at place	Number of vehicles	Number of Animals	Passport control/deficiencies
Bratislava	25	28	
Cierna n. Tisou	9	9	
Vysne Nemecke	405	745	
Ubla	194	194	
Velke Slemence			66/4
Michalovce	674	1014	

The transport of pet animals can represent a risk to their socialization and health. Such a risk is different for companion animals compared to the livestock or slaughter animals, where contact with humans is not so close. Therefore, the transport of animals is more demanding, especially in connection with the elimination of stress.

It is easier for the EU citizens and their dogs, cats, ferrets or other pets to travel within the Union, as all the rules of travelling are harmonized, and the free movement can be enjoyed. It is possible thanks to high advances against rabies and strict vaccination rules. For the movement between EU countries or non-EU countries, vaccinations against rabies must be documented in pet passports or health certificates [8].

Of course, there are some exceptions as is, for example, the current situation in Ukraine when for fast dealing, the travellers are obliged to fill up Permit forms:

- The entry of dogs, cats and ferrets into the Slovak Republic does not meet the conditions set out in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) no. 2021/403
- For the transit of dogs, cats and ferrets through the Slovak Republic, which do not meet the conditions set out in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) no. 2021/403

After arriving at the final destination in the EU, the pet owner must report the place of residence to the competent veterinary authority. [9]

The transport of live animals is demanding and labour intensive. The transport of pets requires careful planning and friendly handling. Transport can be very stressful for any animal and may expose them to many adverse effects on their welfare [10]. The most common and severe problems are the various ways of transport, which can lead to overcrowding (failure of the capacity in transport container), animals are not enough protected from the weather, suffer from a lack of food and water, and finally, there is also a lack of time to rest.

Nowadays, many companies are devoted to animal transport. They try to relieve the owners and breeders of pets from the whole transport process. This requires carefully planned logistics, security and friendly handling [11]. They provide different logistic services, for example:

- Advice and assistance in legal standards for the import and export of live animals, from the preparation as well as during the entire transport period till their destination point;
- Border veterinary inspection / Border control Posts;
- Customs clearance (documents control);
- Applications for permits and reservations for the quarantine of live animals;
- Rental of shipping containers and boxes.

Animal welfare is the most respected and defended within the EU Member States and is an example for the rest of the world. The EU has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world. Well-planned logistics can bring maximum flexibility and speed. The entire transport process must be managed and controlled by Logistic-Controlling-permanent information about the condition of the transported object [12].

## **5. DISCUSSION**

It should be noted that veterinary border control is an important factor in ensuring that live animals and animal-derived products entering a country are safe and meet the specific import/transit conditions imposed by legislation. Veterinary border checks necessitate a comprehensive legal framework as well as competent and credible veterinary services at both the central and border post levels. Border Inspection Posts (BIP) are located on the external borders of European Union member states (EU). The only BIP in Luxembourg is located at the Cargo Center at Luxembourg Airport, which also serves as the country's only border entry point with third countries. Imported live animals and animal products pose the greatest risk because they can transmit serious human and animal diseases or carry other risks. As a result, they must be subjected to special controls at their point of entry. A consignment of live animals or products of animal origin should only enter a country if the specific veterinary checks have been completed satisfactorily and a "Veterinary Entry Document" has been issued for release into free circulation. From the annual report published by the SVFA (State Veterinary and Food Administration), there were no cases of pet animals being returned during non-commercial movement in 2020 due to a lack of submitted veterinary certificates. Only eight instances of irregularity were documented. Third-country certificates were issued to 3358 countries in 2020. 1704 certificates were issued for live animals and germinal products, while 1654 certificates were issued for animal products. Before certification, all deficiencies discovered during spot-check inspections had to be corrected. Unfortunately, we did not find any specific information that could be used in the discussion, for comparison with Slovak border controls.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Animal transport can be commercial and non-commercial. It is all regarding the live animal species and their future use (slaughter animals, pets, from a zoo to zoo, ...). Based on this, different types of certificates are needed and requested. Also, different types of transport can be used, such as motor vehicles, aeroplanes, trains, ships, etc. Commercial transport means transporting dogs, cats and ferrets for sale, marketing

purposes, and possession to another owner. It does not apply to a movement within the territory of the Slovak Republic. Non-commercial transport means transporting dogs, cats, and ferrets to accompany their owner or holder for a different purpose, for example, vacation, sports, or visit. The conditions under which the animals can be transported are regulated in the European Regulation on the Protection of Animal during Transport. The following research will aim to continue our research and compare it to other countries' legislation because there are no specific rules for transporting companion animals in cars (if there is any).

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