Recommendation 287 (1961)[1]

International transit of animals

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

Recalling its Resolution 134 (1957) on the regulation of the export of live animals for slaughter;

Considering that the humane treatment of animals is one of the hall-marks of Western civilisation, but that, even in member States of the Council of Europe, the necessary standards are not always observed;

Considering that the "World Federation for the Protection of Animals" has asked the Council of Europe to support its draft Convention for the international regulation of the transit of live animals,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers should draft, and invite the member States to sign and ratify, a Convention for the regulation of the international transit of animals based on the following draft prepared by the World Federation for the Protection of Animals, it being understood that the Convention would be open to accession by other States with the least possible formality :

Convinced that the legitimate requirements of the international trade in livestock are not incompatible with a due regard for the welfare of the animals in transit by land, water or air;

Have agreed on the following provisions :

Article I

The High Contracting Parties undertake to enact the necessary legislation and take the necessary administrative measures to prohibit the transport of horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, caged birds and poultry or other domestic or captive mammals or birds under conditions likely to cause preventable cruelty or suffering.

These measures should more particularly include regulations :

1. 1. For ensuring for animals carried by sea a proper supply of food and water and proper ventilation and for protecting them from all preventable suffering during the passage and on landing;

2. For ensuring for animals carried by air all possible precautions to prevent suffering, including a proper supply of food and water on the journey and during any detention before or after the journey and suitable housing during such detention;

3. For ensuring for animals carried by rail or road a proper supply of food and water and proper ventilation throughout the journey;

4. For the immediate slaughter in a humane manner of any sick or seriously injured animal;

5. For the disposal of dead animals and the removal of litter, dung, etc ;

6. For the provision of sufficient head room and proper space having regard to the length of the journey by land, water or air ;

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1. Assembly debate on 22nd September 1961 (10th Sitting) (see Doc. 1340, Report of the Committee on Agriculture). Text adopted by the Assembly on 22nd September 1961 (10th Sitting).

7. For providing and maintaining a proper supply of food and water to animals during any detention thereof ;

8. For setting a limit of 24 hours to the time which animals can spend in transit by rail or road without unloading.

In the case of horses, the measures should include the following further regulations :

9. For inspection by a Government veterinary official or a veterinary surgeon in private practice approved by the State and the issue of a certificate that, in respect both of its age and condition, each horse is capable of being conveyed without suffering and worked without suffering ;

10. For the provision of separate stalls, suitably padded for each horse carried ;

11. The transit of blind horses should be prohibited unless necessary for their welfare, when special protection should be taken against the risk of injury.

In the case of captive wild animals or birds, the measures should include the following further regulations :

12. That captive wild animals or birds shall only be transported between countries when accompanied by a certificate countersigned by the concerned Government departments of the exporting and importing countries stating that the animals are being consigned to bona fide institutions possessing the facilities and knowledge to prevent conditions likely to cause cruelty or suffering to the particular species named in each consignment ;

13. That the accommodation during travelling shall not cause overcrowding or severe restrictions of movement, according to the accepted requirements of the particular species, in such manner as to cause suffering or disease ;

14. That where a particular method of transit is known to be objectionable for a particular species (for example the transport by sea of monkeys), a more acceptable method shall be utilised (for example the transport by air of monkeys);

15. (a) Each consignment of wild animals or birds to be transported shall be provided by the consignee with adequate instructions, in the language of the exporting and importing country and in the language of any intermediate country through which the consignment must pass, regarding times of watering, type and times of feeding, and other necessary details of management to prevent suffering during transit; cards bearing such information shall be attached to each cage or container, and the carrier, and the carrier's appointed agent in charge of the land, water or air transporter shall be legally responsible for the proper administration of the attached instructions;

(b) In the case of transport by water a copy of such instructions shall also be handed to the commander of the vessel, or his appointed personal representative, and the said vessel commander shall also be responsible for the provision and proper use of suitable cleaning utensils and materials.

Article II

In order to be allowed to pass in transit (which transit is conditional on the issue of prior authorisation by the central veterinary authority of the country crossed in transit) a certificate that the regulations of the exporting country have been duly observed, must accompany the animals. It may be drawn up in the language of either the exporting or importing country.

Article III

The High Contracting Parties undertake to notify one another without delay of any causes likely to impede the transit of live animals to provide against which special arrangements may be necessary in order to prevent suffering.

Article IV

The High Contracting Parties undertake to enact the necessary legislation to ensure proper veterinary supervision of animals and birds being transported by land, water or air across national boundaries so as to provide within reason against preventable cruelty, suffering and disease.

a. Such veterinary supervision shall include provisions for the accompaniment by a qualified veterinarian on each land, water or air transporter in which the total consignments of animals or birds for international transit exceeds a maximum figure, whether of single or mixed species, to be agreed upon by the High Contracting Parties.

b. Such veterinary supervision shall include provisions for the carrier's appointed agent in charge of the land, water or air transporter, in which the total consignments of animals or birds does not exceed the maximum figure agreed upon by the High Contracting Parties under paragraph (a) above, to obtain the prompt assistance of a qualified veterinarian in the event of conditions arising during transit likely to cause cruelty or suffering.

c. Such veterinary supervision shall include provisions with regard to transit by sea whereby such emergency attention by a qualified veterinarian shall not necessarily be delayed until the berthing of the vessel or disembarkation of the consignment but, where conditions permit, allow every reasonable effort to be made to secure veterinary assistance for the alleviation of suffering on the High Seas.

d. Such veterinary supervision shall include the recognition of an international marine flag, such as a plain blue circle on a white background, which when flown from a sea-going vessel carrying livestock would indicate the immediate need for a qualified veterinarian on board."