



Welfare of Animals in Livestock Markets

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Introduction

- 1 A day at the market is potentially a very stressful time for any animal since it involves transport to and from a totally strange environment. This Code supplements the provisions of the Welfare of Animals at Markets Order 1990, and provides guidance to operators, staff and users of livestock markets. It covers the need for calm and careful handling, penning arrangements, shelter and feeding and watering where necessary, as well as including advice on conduct within the market. The Code is not intended to be a complete explanation of the law, which should be consulted by anyone seeking information on statutory obligations or offences. However, it is possible that the provisions of the Code may be brought to the Court's attention during any legal proceedings under the Order.

Types of Animals Covered

- 2 The Markets Order and this Code are intended to cover the welfare needs of cattle, sheep and goats, other ruminants (such as deer, llamas etc.), pigs, rabbits and poultry.
- 3 By 'poultry' we mean domestic fowls, turkeys, geese, ducks, guinea-fowl, pheasants, partridges and quail.
- 4 Horses and ponies are dealt with in a separate Order, the Welfare of Horses at Markets (and Other Places of Sale) Order 1990 and a related Code of Practice.

Responsibilities for Welfare

- 5 Irrespective of the legal offences of causing animals injury or unnecessary suffering everyone who handles, transports, buys or sells animals at a market is responsible for their welfare and has a duty to take all necessary steps to prevent suffering.
- 6 Well conducted markets where proper attention is paid to the welfare of all the animals reflect the work of good and conscientious market operators (usually the auctioneers). They should appoint a responsible member of their staff to attend to the animals' welfare while they remain on market premises. In particular this person should oversee the unloading and loading of animals, personally supervising as much as possible. His or her identity and availability should be prominently displayed in the market. That person, and all market staff, should also be identifiable by means of uniform, armband or badge, so that welfare problems can be brought to their attention. Ideally a veterinary surgeon should be on hand.
- 7 Local Authority Inspectors* are responsible for enforcing the Order. Details of how to contact them and the Government's Divisional Veterinary Officer should be on prominent display in the market.

*These inspectors are employed by the County Council or Metropolitan Authority in England and Wales, and the Regional or Island Councils in Scotland.

Unfit Animals and Animals Likely to Give Birth

- 8 These animals must not be sent to market. The Transit of Animals (Road and Rail) Order 1975, as amended, relates to the transport of unfit animals, or those likely to give birth. But the Markets Order makes it a specific offence to expose for sale any unfit animal or one likely to give birth. They must not therefore be put through a sale ring or sold in a market.

- 9 An unfit animal can be one that is diseased, ill, injured, lame, deformed, emaciated, weak or exhausted. It is not possible to list the various degrees and types of injury, illness etc. So to avoid causing animals suffering and the risk of prosecution, owners and hauliers must ensure that only fit, healthy animals are sent to market. Auctioneers and other market operators should make it very clear that unfit animals will not be accepted in their markets.

Transport

- 10 The journey to the market can determine the state and condition of animals on arrival. A poorly driven or badly maintained vehicle with inadequate accommodation, can lead to extreme stress and injury before animals ever reach the market. Not only can poor standards of care during loading, unloading and carriage be against the law but will almost certainly affect adversely the animals' condition and reduce their sale value accordingly.
- 11 Where possible, unloading sites should be located close to available pens or other accommodation. This will reduce the need for animals to be moved about the premises. Straw or other suitable material should be used on ramps or other surfaces where necessary, to prevent the risk of injury.

Droving

- 12 Animals require calm, sympathetic, unhurried handling, by persons competent and experienced with livestock. This causes less stress on both animals and handlers. Another important factor is to allow livestock only one unobstructed way ahead. For example, before unloading animals from a lorry, handlers should make sure that the way is clear to an available and suitable pen.
- 13 Animals react to sight, smell and sound, but each type also has its own characteristics. Animals react in different ways to certain circumstances. For example:
- Sheep have acute hearing and a strong herd instinct.
 - Pigs have strong sense of smell but poor hearing and vision. They have minds of their own and react poorly to 'the big stick' approach. Pig boards or flat slap sticks can be useful to usher the animals forward.
 - Cattle particularly steers and bulls, can be stubborn and must be treated with great care, for both human and animal safety.
- 14 Sticks should only be used as an extension of the arm for persuasion and encouragement and NOT to beat animals with.
- DO NOT:
- (i) Use sticks with nails or other sharp points or projections;
 - (ii) Strike animals with plastic piping;
 - (iii) Kick, punch or drag animals.
- Electric goads should not be necessary and should be used only as a last resort. In law their use is restricted to the hind-quarters of cattle over 6 months and adult pigs where their way forward is clear.

Handling

- 15 Direct human contact with the animals should be kept to a minimum. The law specifically forbids several ways of lifting and carrying; basically, no animals or birds must be lifted, dragged or carried by the head, neck, ears, horns, legs, feet, tail, fleece or wing. But everyone should think carefully about whether animals are being caused pain or discomfort. For instance, the temptation to lift calves by any neck tie should be resisted, as should twisting their tail and wheel-barrowing'.
- 16 There will be circumstances when a lead sheep or goat may be guided or otherwise moved by the horns or neck fleece, although this must not extend to dragging bodily. Pulling of the wool can cause bruising so particular care should be taken.

Lamb and Goat Kids

- 17 It should not be necessary for unaccompanied young lambs and kids to be subjected to the rigours of market day. 'Lamb banks' or other self-help arrangements are much preferred. If these young animals are brought to market without their dams, they must be:
 - (i) In addition the pens for lambs and goat kids under 4 weeks must have solid sides;
 - (ii) Sold in the pen;
 - (iii) They must spend no longer than 4 hours in the market.
- 18 Potential well-meaning but ignorant, casual purchasers of 'pet' lambs and kids should be discouraged. This will avoid future welfare problems when the animals are growing or rejected.
- 19 Lambs at the foot of their dams need not by law be housed in covered accommodation. But these young animals are nevertheless also vulnerable to exposure stress, particularly in wet weather, so every effort should be made to provide shelter in inclement conditions. Both lambs and goat kids under 4 weeks when at the foot of their dams should be sold in their pens, not through the sale ring, and not purchased separately. Mothers and young should be removed from the market as soon as possible.

Deer

- 20 Deer are sensitive animals and attract particular public attention. Ideally they should not be transported to and from markets. If they are, separate sale days should be arranged, or total separation from other animals, to avoid the deer being subjected to the hurly burly of a normal market day. Arrangements should be in accordance with the British Deer Farmers' Association Sale Rules and Guidelines. In particular very young deer calves (e.g. red deer less than 30 kg in weight) should not be brought to market.

Penning and Caging

- 21 The basic need is for all animals to be given appropriate accommodation according to size and species. Pens and cages should not be overcrowded and each calf and pig must be able to lie down. These animals must have suitable bedding and be under cover, as must dairy cattle and goats in milk or during pregnancy.

- 22 Special care should be taken in separating certain animals:
 - (i) Animals of significantly different size (except of course where females have young at foot);
 - (ii) Fractious animals which could bully or injure;
 - (iii) Except for bull beef animals which have been reared together, adult entire males should be kept apart from each other, and separate from other animals. Some males can become agitated if females are close by, and could injure themselves;
 - (iv) Any unfit animals must be kept apart from other stock in special pens where they can be tended.

- 23 Deer and goats should not be tied but kept in high-sided pens. Calves must not be tied or muzzled.

- 24 Animals penned outside in a market are unable to seek protection from the weather including the heat of the sun. Sheep should not be penned too tightly, and special attention should be paid to heavily fleeced sheep in warm weather. Recently-shorn sheep (and any animals used to covered accommodation) may require shelter in adverse weather conditions.

- 25 The covered areas of a market should be adequately ventilated in warm weather. Pigs can overheat very quickly so on hot days it is important to watch for signs of heat stress. Emergency cooling can be carried out with water hoses or a sprinkler system, although care should be taken to avoid causing excessive humidity in an enclosed space.

Poultry and Rabbits

- 26 Not all markets have sales of poultry or rabbits but such birds and animals have the same basic needs for protection, food, water and careful handling as other livestock. They should be held in suitable covered draught-free accommodation and not handled unnecessarily or sold in a ring. It is important that cage or hutch openings are not so small that they can cause injury. Food and especially water should be made available.
- 27 Rabbits (1) and poultry (2) must be transported in suitable containers with room to move. Sacks or plastic bags will not do.
(1) The Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973, as amended.
(2) The Welfare of Poultry (Transport) Order 1988, as amended.
- 28 Rabbits should not be lifted or carried by the ears, or by the scruff of the neck when otherwise unsupported. When in the market, rabbits must be able to sit upright on all-fours without their ears touching the top of the cage or hutch.
- 29 The slaughter of rabbits in markets is not to be encouraged, but where it occurs this should be carried out quickly and humanely by competent persons appointed by the market operator and in suitable premises set aside for the purpose.
- 30 Poultry sold in markets can be of many types, shapes and sizes. A standard cage for hens will not suffice for turkeys and the Markets Order requires birds to be able to stand upright in their natural position. Birds must not be tied by the neck, wings or legs, except for any brief period by the legs during weighing.
- 31 The slaughter of poultry in markets is not to be encouraged, but where it occurs this should be carried out quickly and humanely by licensed slaughterers and in suitable premises set aside for the purpose. The Slaughter of Poultry (Humane Conditions) Regulations 1984, as amended, require that poultry intended for slaughter at a market must be placed in cages where there is room for them to stand upright, turn around and stretch their wings. They must also be provided with a sufficient supply of food and water.

Feeding and Watering

- 32 Potentially, a long time could elapse without animals being fed and watered, from their last feed on the vendors' farm, during journeys to and from market and in the time spent there. This situation must be avoided. It is not safe to assume that animals have recently been fed and for the person currently in charge to leave the responsibility to someone else.
- 33 Clean water should be available to all animals at risk of becoming thirsty. It is especially important to provide water to lactating animals and that during hot weather all livestock are carefully watched and provided for.
- 34 During any market day, vendors and auctioneers should be in no doubt who is to provide suitable food and water to animals on arrival or during their stay at the market. The law requires animals to be fed and watered on arrival when any journey is completed over 15 hours from when the animals were last fed. This is a maximum, not standard period. Moreover, the Markets Order lays down requirements for feeding and watering animals arriving in the market the day before a sale or remaining afterwards overnight. The feed offered must be appropriate for the animals concerned.

Calves

- 35 Vendors presenting calves for sale should ensure that they have received adequate colostrum during the first 24 hours of life. By law, no calves under 7 days of age or with a wet or unhealed navel can be brought to market.
- 36 The Farm Animal Welfare Council considered that restricting the number of times a calf can be sold would prove an effective way of helping reduce stress and the incidence of infectious disease in such young animals. The Order places the onus on vendors and auctioneers to ensure that young calves have not been sent to a market more than twice in the previous 4 weeks. The Order also requires calves to be removed from the market within 4 hours of the last calf sale.
- 37 This Code has already referred to the need for covered accommodation, bedding and adequate room for each calf.

Sale Rings

- 38 The auction ring is an unfamiliar and noisy environment for animals in which they may be isolated from others and kept on the move. The need for calm, considerate handling is therefore particularly important at this point. The habitual hitting or goading of animals within the sale ring should not be permitted. Rings should be kept clear: not more than two people need be there. Entrances and exits to the ring, and all passageways, must be unobstructed. The height of passageways and the ring should be adequate to contain the species of animal exposed for sale.
- 39 If an auction ring is used for the sale of calves it should be close to the calf pens to reduce the need to move calves around the market. All animals with young at foot should be sold in the pen and not moved around the market without good reason.

Facilities

- 40 Buyers' pens for collecting animals purchased by major regular buyers should be provided, when possible, to minimise unnecessary repeat handling. Indeed, the design of any new market facilities should reflect the welfare needs of animals by reducing, for example, noise and the distance travelled within the market. In particular, fixed loading ramps with side protection must be incorporated in plans for new markets or where existing premises are being significantly altered. Advice should be sought from specialists in market design (such as the Meat and Livestock Commission) and the State Veterinary Service to ensure that welfare is properly provided for.
- 41 Adequate pens should be provided for any unfit animals as required by the Markets Order. For calves these should be close to the entry points so that any weak, injured or sick animals can be isolated directly on arrival.
- 42 Pens used for adult boars should be designed to prevent them coming into contact with each other. Solid-sided pens are preferable provided adequate ventilation can be assured.
- 43 All pens, auction rings, loading ramps and passageways should be provided with flooring constructed so as to minimise slipping, and arrangements made to prevent animals slipping particularly in wet weather. A scattering of sand can help provide grip. Particular attention should be given to the corners of passageways where animals are turning and may be liable to slip, and any dangerous projections likely to bruise or injure animals should be eliminated. Drains should be of adequate size, and manholes should be covered in anti-slip material.
- 44 Where cattle are marked for premium purposes, passages should be designed to lead into a crush and weigh-bridge so that animals can be examined and marked with the minimum of stress.
- 45 Market operators should ensure that fire-fighting equipment is available and is regularly inspected and maintained in good working order. Emergency water supplies should be available for such purposes.

Milking

- 46 Lactating animals (including milk sheep and goats) should not be allowed to become overstocked with milk. This is an offence if it causes unnecessary suffering. Such animals should be milked before travelling to market, sold early and removed. Where milking is necessary however, this should be carried out by skilled personnel.

General Conduct

- 47 Livestock markets can be an interesting attraction to members of the public, but their enthusiasm, especially that of children, can be to the detriment of the animals' welfare. All unnecessary noise, disturbance, prodding and obstruction of animals should be avoided. Market users should not obstruct passageways being used by animals.

- 48 Dogs should be kept under control at all times, and prevented from annoying animals in any way. They should not be allowed in sections where poultry or rabbits are present.

- 49 Anyone observing any likely or actual unnecessary suffering should report it immediately, in the first instance to the market's appointed welfare officer, or to the local authority inspector or official vet.

Further information

If you would like any further information or advice relating to this code please contact DEFRA's Animal Welfare Division on 020 7904 6512.

DEFRA (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). Further copies of this publication are available from: Defra Publications, Admail 6000, London, SW1A 2XX, Tel: 0845 955 600.

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