

Press Release

Live exports by sea

8,000 Animals Stranded at Sea

NGOs call for systematic approach to end live exports by sea

Freiburg, 16th March 2022. Animal Welfare Foundation (AWF), Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) and Animals International (AI) have witnessed how an old, former cargo ship with nearly 8,000 animals on board needed to be replaced while at sea. Inadequate European legislation and its poor implementation regularly lead to prolonged suffering of animals exported outside the EU.

On February 23rd, the livestock carrier Spiridon II left Tarragona in Spain. The country is one of the main exporters of live animals in Europe. Around 300 young bulls from France and Spain as well as 7,600 Spanish sheep were on board. Their destination was the Port of Aqaba in Jordan.

On February 27th, engine problems occurred. The journey was interrupted, and the ship spent three days near Greek ports. Unloading the animals onto European grounds was not an option. Once on the water, they are declared as so-called “export” animals and cannot re-enter the EU. This often leads to tragic consequences, such as the odysseys of Karim Allah and Elbeik in early 2021, where 2,600 calves and cattle were subjected to emergency slaughter.

Spiridon II was finally brought to Eleusis, near Athens, Greece on March 4. There the 8,000 animals were loaded directly from one vessel to another, namely, the livestock carrier Adel I, via a ramp, on the water. The reason for this manoeuvre at sea was that the port of Eleusis is not authorised to transport animals to third countries. On long journeys like this, there is no veterinarian on board, regardless of the number of animals. This was also the case on Spiridon II. It remains unclear whether the animals were fit to continue the journey to Jordan after 10 days onboard the vessel. It also remains unclear whether unfit animals were emergency euthanised on site.

Maria Boada-Saña, veterinarian and project manager at AWF, criticises live exports by sea: *“The livestock vessels currently operating in the EU were converted from car ferries or cargo ships to livestock carriers at the moment when they should have been scrapped because they were too obsolete to continue. They are ancient vessels, operating under suspicious flags, and are poorly designed and maintained. These vessels pose many risks for the safety of the animals, the crew, and the environment.”*

This latest event just adds to a long list of problematic live exports. And Spiridon II is just one of too many old vessels with many deficiencies and unexpected problems arising during the journey. NGOs have repeatedly drawn attention to the underlying problems. Emergencies at sea cannot be solved easily and result in longer transports. If the competent authorities lose responsibility for ships that have left port, any unforeseen incident can have tragic consequences, as the example of Elbeik and Karim Allah shows. There should be a systematic approach to solving the problem instead of makeshift solutions for every single case.

NGOs exposed that during exports by sea, Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on animal transports cannot be complied with. This shows once again that the current legislation and the ruling of the European Court of Justice do not ensure real protection of animals during the entire transport. *“Once more, this latest incident reveals the severe flaws of EU’s live animal exports. The horrendous*

suffering that animals endure during live exports and the all too frequent mechanical problems of the vessels cannot go unnoticed. We urge the EU Commission to take immediate action on this matter. The current revision of the EU's animal welfare rules presents the perfect opportunity to ban this cruelty once and for all," says Olga Kikou, Head of CIWF EU.

"Spiridon II remained in the port of Eleusis until March 8, when it left for reparation. The animals who survived the stressful journey so far arrived in Jordan on March 9, to be slaughtered in the most shocking and cruel conditions which are illegal in the EU," reports Gabriel Paun of AI, who has been documenting the treatment of EU-exported animals for years.

Further information:

Spiridon II

The former cargo ship Spiridon II, with Togolose flag, was converted into a livestock carrier in 2011 and is now 49 years old. It is ranked high risk by Port State Control Paris MoU and listed on its blacklist. The last of eight detentions was imposed in 2020, mainly due to structural conditions. 29 deficiencies were detected. Still, the current approval runs until 2024 and was issued by Spanish authorities.

Adel I

The former car carrier ship Adel I, with Jamaican flag, was converted into a livestock carrier in 2017 and is now 41 years old. Three detentions since 2010. It was last approved by Croatian authorities until March 4, 2023.

ANIT Vote (Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport) on January 20, 2022

On January 20, 2022, the European Parliament voted on the ANIT Committee's motion for a resolution B9-0057/2022. In its recommendations, the ANIT Committee

- calls for measures enabling a shift to a meat, carcasses and genetic material trade to replace sea transport of live animals;
- urges the EU Commission to improve and clarify the provisions on maritime transport; in particular on the authorisation process, the definition and identification of organisers and transporters and of their obligations, in order to establish a clear chain of responsibility and transparent communication between farmers, transporters and veterinarians with the competent authorities;
- calls for the introduction of dissuasive measures to prevent dead animals from being discarded in the sea or on transport routes in accordance with the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (the Marpol Convention);
- considers the mandatory presence of an independent veterinarian as essential, proportionate to the number of animals, during rest periods at official lairage facilities, and loading and unloading, in particular for long-distance transport;
- calls on the Member States to introduce mandatory provisions for sea journeys, ensuring the presence of veterinarians or, as last resort, a certified professional with appropriate skills, on board for the whole duration of the sea journey, in order to verify the implementation of the relevant animal health and welfare standards and provide real-time support for sick or injured animals on vessels, as well as to adjust the watering and feeding of the animals to their immediate needs.



Media contacts:

Animals International

Gabriel Paun

EU Director

Enquiries@animalsinternational.org

Tel.: +43 664 1850 717

Compassion in World Farming EU

Olga Kikou

Head of CIWF EU

Olga.Kikou@ciwf.org

Tel.: +30 6972004963

Animal Welfare Foundation

Maria Boada-Saña

Project Manager Sea Transport

m.boada@awf-tsb.org

Tel.: +41 79 330 93 42