



Eyes on  
Animals

Watching  
out for their  
welfare

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# Transport of spent laying hens from the Netherlands to Poland

Date: 2014/03/31

Team: Margaret Steendijk (Eyes on Animals), Siri Kampmann (Animal Welfare Foundation)

## **Background and goal of the investigation**

Eyes on Animals and Animal Welfare Foundation conducted a random night inspection and spotted a Polish poultry truck loading hens at a farm near Weert, the Netherlands.

Since the transport company was Polish and poultry has to be supplied with fresh water after 12 hours at the latest, the team wanted to check if the trucks are provided with a water system.

Some statements from the staff at the farm suggest that the transport will last approximately 17 hours.

## **Observations**

**Date: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014**

21:00

We arrive at the farm.

From the outside we observe the loading of one truck. The animals are put into containers. We hear the birds vocalize loudly in distress.

21:45

We go towards the truck. We ask for the driver but only the catchers are present. The catchers seem to be Polish too. They allow us to take footage of the loading.

### **Truck:**

Transport company: Lech-Drób (Polish)

License plate: (PL) NIL 15644 (front), NIL 20245 (back)

The cabin of the truck is white, the semi-trailer is made out of metal (containers).

There is a sign indicating live animals in the back and in the front.

We cannot identify a water system or nipples for drinking on the inside of the containers.



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#### **Veterinarian service:**

During our visit we do not observe any veterinarian authority. At the moment of loading and departure the truck and water system re not checked by an authority.

#### **Supply of water:**

We cannot identify any water system. We look inside the containers to search for drinking nipples but we are not able to see any.

#### **Loading/handling of the animals:**

The animals are carried out of the building upside-down, in groups of four or six. Then they are tossed into the containers carelessly. The animals are stressed and they vocalize loudly in distress.



*Carried out in groups of four/six*



*Tossed into the containers*

#### **State of the animals:**

The plumage of most animals is very thin. Some of them have large bald spots.



*Large bald spots, poorly feathered*



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Some animals are dead (at least four), they are thrown aside.



*Dead chickens tossed aside*

22:00

The trailer is half-filled with animals. It has to turn around to load the other half.

23:20

We decide to look for the driver again, in order to ask for the truck's destination. We can't find him but are asked about our permission to enter the farm. We are told to wait for the driver outside.

23:40

The truck drives to another entrance of the farm. There we observe a second truck, same transport company, license plate in the front: NIL 21882. It has been loaded already.

The first truck uses the weighing bridge. Tarps are drawn over both of the trucks.

Again we try to speak to the drivers. They seem to speak neither English nor Dutch or German, only Polish.

After a few minutes a worker from the farm appears. He says he had seen us on the cameras and asks what we are doing.

We ask him about the water system and he says that the trucks have one. He shows us a tank below the containers and asks one driver to open the tarps again. He doesn't want to, only shows us some rubber hoses, going from the tank to the upper part of the truck. So we are not able to confirm that there has been an appropriate water system for the animals.

0:00 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2014)

Both trucks leave, each of them with two drivers.



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## Evaluation of the observations

### **Absent veterinarian**

We wonder why there was no vet present in order to supervise the loading and check that the truck satisfies all the requirements for long distance transport of poultry (water tank present, functioning and intact water system, correct handling and loading of the birds).

### **Water system**

We cannot confirm that there was an appropriate and running water system. We couldn't see anything on the inside of the containers that looked like nipples for chickens.

### **Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005, Annex I, Chapter III, point 2.7**

**“(...) If not otherwise specified, Mammals and Birds shall be fed at least every 24 hours and watered at least every 12 hours. The water and feed shall be of good quality and presented to the animals in a way which minimizes contamination. Due regard shall be paid to the need of animals to become accustomed to the mode of feeding and watering.”**

### **Handling of the animals**

The violent handling of the animals clearly caused them unnecessary pain and stress.

### **Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005, Annex I, Chapter III**

#### **1.8. It shall be prohibited to**

**(...)**

**(d) Lift or drag the animals by heads, ears, horns, legs, tail or fleece, or handle them in such a way as to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering;**

### **Suggestion to the Dutch authorities**

We would appreciate, if the Dutch authorities would check on these specific trailers of the Polish company Lech Drób next time when they are loading birds in the Netherlands. Our team tried to detect and is not able to confirm the existence of a water system on these specific ones.

We would like to see the application of penalties for mistreatment of birds during loading and mandatory trainings for chicken catchers, or at least the banning of using certain chicken-catching companies that do not have staff that take proper care of the welfare of the animals during loading.

2014/04/22,

Signed: Margreet Stendijk (EonA), Siri Kampmann (AWF)