

KEITH TAYLOR
Green Party
for the South East of England



Commissioner Dalli
DG Health and Consumer Policy
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049
Brussels

24th November 2011

Dear Commissioner Dalli,

Re: Suspension of license to transport live animals from Ramsgate, UK

Thank you for your previous replies on the issue of animal transportation. Recent investigations clearly demonstrate that current legislation on animal transportation is not being enforced and does not provide sufficient protection for the welfare of animals in transport. Therefore, I am disappointed that the European Commission's recent report on the impact of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport does not propose any changes to the current legislation, and in particular does not propose reduced journey times.

The live transport of animals is of great concern to the British public and in the South East England region, many of my constituents are deeply concerned about the transport of animals through the ports of Dover and Ramsgate. In particular I am writing to voice my concerns regarding the licensing which allows the boat, RV Joline to transport live animals by sea from Ramsgate port in the UK.

It has been brought to my attention that Mr Johannes Onderwater, a Dutch animal trader, is transporting calves from the port of Ramsgate, despite previous convictions for animal welfare offences. In September 2009, *Onderwater Agneaux*, a company owned by Mr Onderwater, was fined £10,370 (12,064 Euros) for transporting sheep through the port of Dover on passenger ferries and concealing them in standard trailers. The firm was convicted at Dover magistrates' court of six charges under the Welfare of Animals Transport Order.

Despite this conviction, the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) have revealed that Mr Onderwater has obtained a licence to transport animals from the Dutch authorities. One of Mr Onderwater's Dutch-registered companies, *Barco de Vapor*, owns the Joline and pays the berthing fees. Therefore, despite previous animal welfare convictions, Mr Onderwater is continuing to transport animals using a Dutch license taken out by a company registered at his address, but not in his name.

My understanding is that European regulation prohibits any person convicted of serious animal welfare offences from transporting animals for three years. Can the Commission confirm whether this is the case and who is responsible for ensuring that those banned from transporting animals in the UK do not attain a licence from another European country to avoid this ban, as appears to be the case here?

In addition to the question of the licence the vessel used by Mr Onderwater's company is the Latvian registered RV Joline, a river roll on roll off (RO-RO) ferry which has been upgraded for ocean transit. As an ex-river ferry, it is flat bottomed with a shallow draft; therefore it is exposed to poor weather conditions. The RV Joline is therefore not suitable to undertake journeys with live animals across the channel, especially as winter approaches. With a previous animal welfare convictions and a vessel unfit for purpose I am concerned that EU law appears to be being broken, with associated risks for the animals being transported. I therefore urge the Commission to do all it can to investigate Mr Onderwater's licence and take appropriate action as a matter of urgency.

In addition, I would like to repeat my call for the EU to introduce stronger legislation to protect the welfare of animals during transport, in particular address the key issues of journey times and space allowance.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Keith Taylor
Green Party MEP for South East England