

**KEITH TAYLOR**  
Green Party  
*for the South East of England*



The Rt. Hon. James Paice MP  
Minister of State for Agriculture and Food  
Defra  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR

24<sup>th</sup> November 2011

Defra ref: MC249992/LH

Dear Minister,

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

Thank you for your previous replies on the issue of animal transportation. I am aware that the current legislation must be improved through changes at an EU level. 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.

I do, however, welcome the Commission's call for Member States to improve enforcement of the legislation. As highlighted in the Commission's report and highlighted by investigative footage by UK animal welfare organisation, improvements to enforcement are urgently needed to protect the welfare of animals during transport.

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 port of Ramsgate. I am aware, as you mention in your letter, that current EU trade rules prevent a ban on live exports from Ramsgate, and I feel these rules must be challenged at EU level. This was not, however, the enquiry voiced in my original letter. What I am keen to find out is what monitoring of transportation conditions are taking place for animals being exported from Ramsgate port and whether Defra are satisfied that EU animal transportation standards are being met.

I am also keen to find out more about the licensing which allows the current shipments to occur, and the suitability of the boat RV Joline to transport live animals by sea from Ramsgate.

**Previous animal welfare offences**

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 convicted of six charges under the Welfare of Animals Transport Order at Dover magistrates' court.

Despite this ban, as Defra have revealed, Mr Onderwater has obtained a licence to transport animals from the Dutch authorities through his Dutch-registered company, *Barco de Vapor*. Therefore, despite previous animal welfare convictions, Mr Onderwater is continuing to trade.

My understanding is that European regulations prohibit any person convicted of serious animal welfare offences from transporting animals for three years. I have written to the European Commission to gain clarity that this is the case, and to clarify 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. As the department responsible for ensuring that EU legislation on animal transportation is implemented, I would also urge Defra to fully investigate this matter.

### **A vessel and port unfit for purpose**

In addition to the questions surrounding the validity 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. As the vessel currently departs from Ramsgate, rather than Dover, animals spend double the time at sea and the boat is exposed to much more unpredictable weather conditions. The RV Joline is therefore not suitable to undertake journeys with live animals across the channel, especially as winter approaches.

The RSPCA has been monitoring the transportation of animals on the RV Joline from Ramsgate to the continent over a number of months. A recent RSPCA report showed that any delay at the port, such as weather conditions or docking problems, would impact on the ability of the transporter to deliver the animals to the approved lairage in the journey time.

The EU transport regulation states national authorities are responsible for checking and approving the journey logs before long journeys, to ensure that they are realistic and indicate compliance with the Regulation. I believe that the additional time of sailing from the Port of Ramsgate and the timings allowing no opportunity for delays at the port mean these journey logs are not realistic.

With previous animal welfare convictions relating to the company's owner, and a vessel unfit for purpose, it appears that EU regulations may be being broken by *Barco de Vapor*, with increased risk of welfare problems for the animals onboard. As the competence to decide on penalties for private individuals rests solely with the Member States I urge the Defra to do all it can to investigate Mr Onderwater's company license and to turn down journey logs that are likely to break EU regulations on journey times. I also believe the *Barco de Vapor* licence to trade in live animals should be suspended immediately while these issues are addressed.

I would like to know how Defra is ensuring that EU standards are being met for the animals which are being exported from the port of Ramsgate? What monitoring of the transportation conditions are taking place and is Defra satisfied that adequate animal welfare standards are being met?

I very much look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Yours Sincerely,

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

Keith Taylor  
Green Party MEP for South East England