businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Farm animal transport journey times

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

Although the United Kingdom left the European Union (EU) in 2021, certain pieces of legislation (known as 'assimilated law') continue to apply until such time as they are replaced by new UK legislation, revoked or permitted to expire. This means that our guidance still contains references to legislation that originated from the EU.

This guidance is for England

When transported in connection with an economic activity (in other words, a business or trade), horses (except registered horses*), cattle, sheep, goats and pigs must not be transported for more than eight hours, unless the additional requirements for vehicles carrying out long journeys are met.

[*Registered domestic horses are those registered with a recognised breed society or companies like the British Horse Database at Weatherbys. 'Registered domestic Equidae' does not simply mean those with horse passports.]

At the final place of destination, animals must be unloaded, watered and rested for at least 48 hours. Approved assembly centres, including livestock markets, can be places of departure if the animals have travelled to the market less than 100 km (approximately 62 miles) or have been there for at least six hours with sufficient bedding and water. If not, then the time spent travelling to the market must be added to the

journey from the market to establish the journey time.

Definition of 'journey'

'Journey' means the entire operation of transport from 'place of departure' to 'place of destination', including loading at the place of departure, any transfer during the journey, any unloading, rest / accommodation and loading occurring at intermediate points in the journey, until all animals are unloaded at the place of destination.

A 'place of departure' is the place at which the animal is first loaded on to a means of transport, provided that it has been accommodated there for at least 48 hours. Approved assembly centres, including livestock markets, may also be regarded as places of departure (see 'How does a livestock market affect journey times?' below).

A 'place of destination' is the place at which an animal is unloaded from a means of transport and either slaughtered or accommodated for at least 48 hours prior to the time of departure.

Principal requirements

The welfare of animals during transport is protected under assimilated Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 *on the protection of animals in transport and related operations*.

Anyone transporting vertebrate animals on journeys of over 65 km (approximately 40 miles) as part of an economic activity must hold a valid transporter authorisation to do so. Anyone transporting cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, domestic equidae or poultry by road over 65 km is required to hold valid certificates of competence for drivers and attendants of road vehicles. For more information about documentation requirements, please see 'Transporting animals by road'.

All persons who take animals on a journey, whatever the length, should always apply the following good transport practice:

- Journey is properly planned and time is kept to a minimum
- Animals are checked and their needs met during the journey
- Animals are fit to travel
- Vehicle and loading and unloading facilities are designed, constructed and maintained to avoid injury and suffering
- Those handling animals are trained or competent in the task, and do not use violence or any methods likely to cause unnecessary fear, injury or suffering
- Water, feed and rest are given to the animals as needed, and sufficient floor space and height is provided

For more information about welfare requirements, please see 'Welfare of animals during transport'.

Maximum permitted journey times by road

Eight hours, except as set out below. This applies to horses, cattle, sheep, goats and pigs.

Pigs less than three weeks old, lambs less than one week old and calves less than ten days old must not be transported further than 100 km.

Transporters of vertebrate animals carrying out journeys of over eight hours by road must, in addition, have their vehicles or livestock containers inspected and approved according to specific criteria; this includes on-vehicle drinking systems, ventilation systems and temperature monitoring. If these additional provisions for long journeys are met, the journey times in the table below apply.

Animal	Journey time
Unweaned calves, lambs, kids and foals that are still on a milk diet, and unweaned piglets	After a maximum of nine hours travel, a rest period of at least one hour must be given. This is sufficient time for them to be given liquid and, if necessary, fed. After this rest period, they may be transported for a maximum of a further nine hours
Cattle, sheep and goats	After 14 hours of travel, a rest period of at least one hour must be given. This is sufficient time for them to be given liquid and, if necessary, fed. After this rest period, they may be transported for a further 14 hours
Pigs	May be transported for a maximum period of 24 hours and must be offered water at appropriate intervals and afforded an adequate opportunity to drink
Horses (except registered horses)	May be transported for a maximum period of 24 hours. During the journey they must be given liquid and, if necessary, fed every eight hours

If animals have not reached their destination after these journey times, they must be unloaded, fed, watered and rested for 24 hours at an approved control post.

At the final place of destination, animals must be unloaded, watered and rested for at least 48 hours or slaughtered.

Lactating cows, sheep and goats transported without offspring must not be transported for more than 12 hours without being milked.

Different provisions apply when the means of transport is by, or includes, air and/or sea.

Extension to maximum permitted journey times

The maximum journey times of eight hours, for horses, cattle, sheep, goats and pigs, and the journey times if additional provisions are met (as listed in the table above) may, in the interests of the animals, be extended by two hours if this will allow the intended place of destination to be reached.

A single journey in the UK of up to 12 hours' continuous duration is permitted in order to reach the final place of destination without the need for the vehicle to meet the additional provisions required for longer journeys. However, this derogation does not apply to horses, cattle, sheep, goats or pigs.

Livestock markets and journey times

Livestock markets approved as assembly centres by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) can be places of departure if the animals to be transported have either:

- Travelled to the market less than 100 km
  or
- Been accommodated in the market with sufficient bedding, untied if possible, and watered, for at least six hours

In these circumstances, a new journey begins.

If the animals have travelled 100 km or more, or have been in the market for less than six hours, then the time spent travelling to the market must be added to the journey from the market to establish the journey time.

Further information

For more information, please see the section of the GOV.UK website on animal welfare during transport.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law, please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

No major changes.

Last reviewed / updated: June 2026

Key legislation

- Animal Health Act 1981
- Assimilated Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 *on the protection of animals during transport and related operations*
- Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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