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ANIMAL WELFARE INDICATORS AT THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

awish-project.eu

awish@ilvo.vlaanderen.be

Transport-related challenges for broilers
Key-issues description

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Laura Warin _ ITAVI
warin@itavi.asso.fr

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Question for you

What are the key issues during transport regarding animal protection ? *(1 idea = 1 word)*

Word cloud

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Transport of live birds is regulated in Europe

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- **Current** EC regulation (CE n°1/2005) on “the protection of animals during transport and related operations”

- Following EC recent engagements, **a new regulatory proposal was made in Dec. 2023** and is still under negocation between members states

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 7.12.2023
COM(2023) 770 final
2023/0448(COD)

Proposal for a

REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

on the protection of animals during transport and related operations, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1255/97 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005

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Why is it important to regulate transport ?

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- Transport causes stress for broilers as it involves :
  - Different noises – temperatures – light (➔ new environment);
  - “Quick” catching;
  - “Restraint” in containers.

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How to monitor birds during transport ?

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Difficulties	Current ABM	Proposed ABM (EFSA)
Large flocks Lack of visibility in the containers Lot of noise Limited scope for action (better to anticipate)	DOA (reflects mainly hot / cold stress or unfitness for transport), injuries/bruises (withdrawal), body parts entrapped between or inside containers	Posture, distress calls, panting, huddling, fluffing up of feathers, shivering

Question : what ABM are routinely collected in your country to monitor broiler protection during/after transport ?

- Weather forecast are always taken into account to adjust densities in the containers, traveling hours, the use of curtains, …
- Environmental conditions (eg temperatures) are also sometimes monitored in the containers, and very few recent vehicles are equipped with air conditioning systems.

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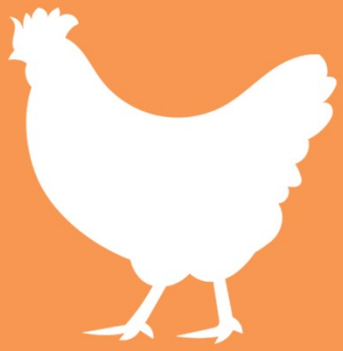
Key issue n°1 Transport duration



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Dead On Arrival (DOA) increases as transport time increases

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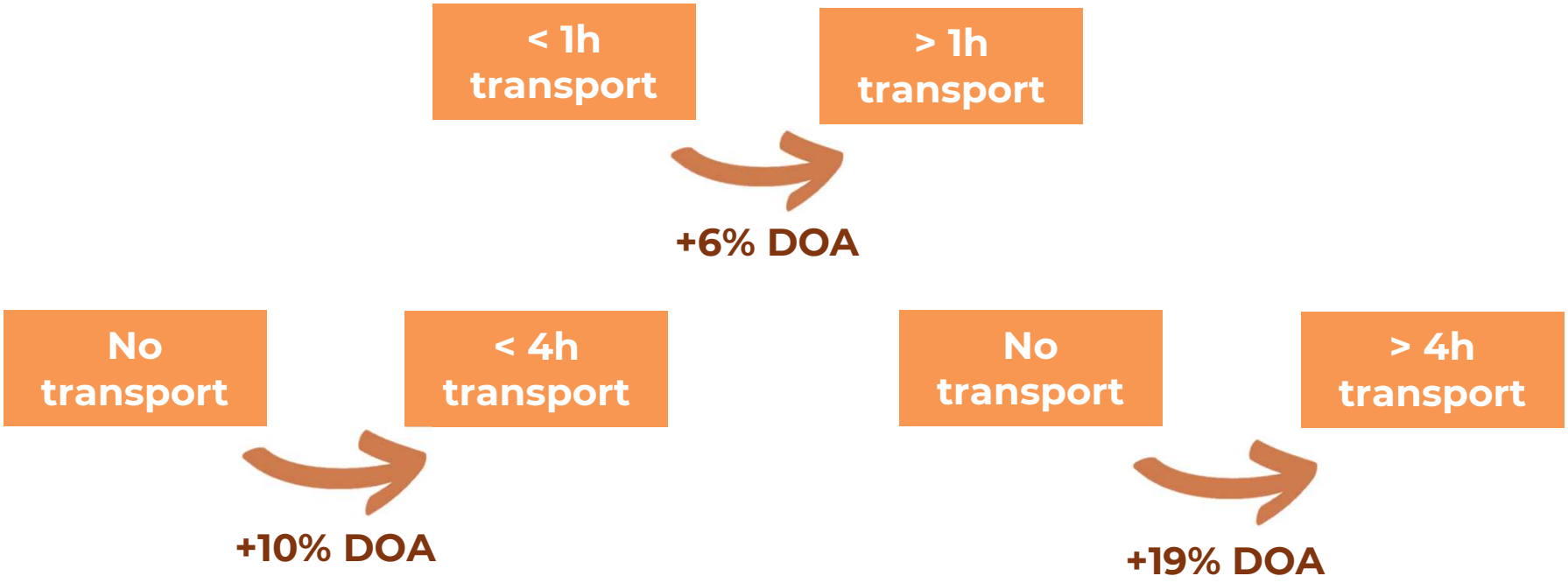

A longer transport duration (time, distance) increases DOA as it worsen the potential thermal stress, hunger / thirst, discomfort, ...

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Warriss et al. (1992), Vecerek et al. (2006), Voslarova et al. (2007), Allen et al. (2023)

EU Regulation

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- **Currently :**
  - Transport duration = journey
  - No maximum total duration for adult birds (it is only required to water birds after 12h of transport and as trucks are not usually equipped with drinkers, the total duration is mainly < 12h)

- **New proposal :**
  - Transport duration = **uploading +** journey **+ downloading**
  - Maximum « transport duration » would be **12h for adult birds**

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Key issue n°2 Feeding & watering

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Are hunger & thirst welfare issues?

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HUNGER

- **Optimal duration for feed restriction**
  - <8h : possible faecal residues
  - >12h : intestinal “suffering” that is detrimental to birds welfare
- Broilers might experience very quickly after feed restriction a **hungry feeling** due to their high metabolism

THIRST

- Current available knowledge and thirst assessment methods are **not sufficient to draw any definite conclusions** but…
- …**water restrictions longer than 6h** are likely associated with **dehydration** (with a high variability between individuals)

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Wabeck (1972); Weeks et al. (2000); Iheukwumere et al. (2003) ;Warriss et al. (2004); Vanderhasselt et al. (2013); Sprenger et al. (2009); EFSA (2022); Wurtz et al. (2024)

EU Regulation

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- **Currently :**
  - Broilers are not fasten for more than 12 hours, and not less than 4 hours (prior to departure);
  - Water is available until the start of catching;
  - Birds must be watered if journey > 12h.

- **New proposal :**
  - Feed and water must be available **during** the transport (no clear if it really concerns poultry)
    - Feed = not relevant for poultry
    - Water = relevant from a welfare point of view but requires new trucks with drinkers (➔ expensive, heavier, …)

Key issue n°3
Available space

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Injuries increase as space decreases

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Density	Observations
More space (> 207cm²/kg)	Traumatic injuries increase *(Miklos et al.)*
From **180cm²/kg** to **230cm²/kg**	From **20%** probability to observe bruises to **60%** *(Saraiva et al.)*

The provision of more space during transport might be associated with reduced DOA… most likely due to reduced heat stress

Height of the containers should be comfortable without increasing the risk of falls / injuries
➔ from 23 to 46cm height, more natural postures observed but also more scratches

Additionnal space does provide more comfort to the birds, but unfortunately does not seem to be as beneficial as expected as it leads to more injuries, except during hot summer because it may reduce heat stress.

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Miklos (2008); Chauvin et al (2011); Vinco et al (2016); Saraiva et al. (2020)

EU Regulation
Available space

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	Currently	New proposal
Live weight	Available space (cm^2/bird)	
1 kg	180-200	?
1,5 kg	270-300	?
2 kg	320	?
2,5 kg	400	?
3 kg	345	?
3,5 kg	403	?
4 kg	460	?
4,5 kg	518	?
5 kg	525	?

≈ + XX % available space

Question :
Compared to the current regulation, how much additional space is required by the new proposal ?

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EU Regulation
Available space

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	Currently	New proposal
Live weight	Available space (cm^2/bird)	
1 kg	180-200	290
1,5 kg	270-300	380
2 kg	320	460
2,5 kg	400	534
3 kg	345	603
3,5 kg	403	669
4 kg	460	731
4,5 kg	518	790
5 kg	525	848

≈ +60% available space

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EU Regulation Height

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- **Currently :**
  - Nothing

- **New proposal :**
  - Broilers must be able to **change posture**, without being disturbed by the height of the container (but no more details)

Broilers live weight (kg)	Current height (cm) in France	Minimum height (EFSA) (cm)
<3,4	23-25,5	23
>3,4	23-25,5	25

Would these EFSA recommendations be a problem for you if it is included in the new regulation?

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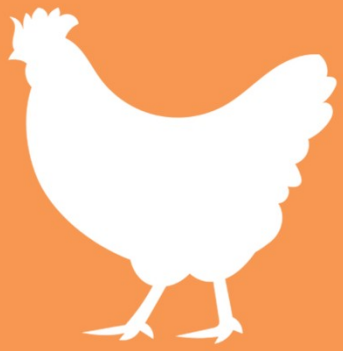
Key issue n°4
Temperatures



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Birds are sensitive to cold and heat stress

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- Below or above the T°/humidity « neutral » values (and depending on air speed, localization in the truck, ...), birds may experience :
  - **Cold stress** ➔ discomfort, dip into their reserves
  - **Heat stress** ➔ compulsory to dissipate heat but... it's not always possible depending on T°/humidity ➔ may lead to mortality

More details will be provided on heat stress during the next presentation

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EU Regulation

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Question : What are the best practices in your countries for transporting poultry in hot weather?

- **Currently :**
  - Birds must be protected against bad weather, extreme T°C, and adverse weather conditions (with no more details)
    - In France, it is forbiden to transport live animals from 1pm to 6pm during heat waves (unless vehicles are equipped with air conditioning). Long duration transport (>8h) are authorised if inside temperatures < 30°C

- **New proposal :**
  - **Curtains** must be used when T°<10°C
  - **Limit transport duration** under high T°, or perform **only night transport** (with no more details)

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Conclusion

Transport duration has a real impact on birds welfare; but thresholds are not yet clearly defined

Scientific data supports the limitation of the **fastening duration** to 12h max; there are lots of uncertainties regarding **water deprivation**

Additionnal space provides more comfort to the birds, but leads to more injuries *(except during summer because it may reduce heat stress)*

Many uncertainties regarding the future regulation, and many questions from stakeholders regarding feasibility & high associated costs

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Question for you

What are the key issues during transport regarding animal protection ?

Rank the most important for you

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