

Who is affected by the new transport legislation?

The new legislation, which came into force in January 2007, brings in new rules covering the movement of poultry. If you move birds as part of farm business activities, then you will be affected.

Under the new rules, everyone transporting animals commercially must comply with:

General Points:

- Poultry means include domestic fowl, ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowl, quails, pheasants and partridges
- From January 2008 transporters and attendants using road vehicles to transport poultry (including “agency drivers”) will need to undertake appropriate training and hold a Certificate of Competence – *this does not apply to those catching and putting birds in to crates.*
- Vehicles that carry poultry in containers only are not required to be inspected and approved.
- Assessment of fitness of poultry to travel must be taken prior to loading into transport containers.
- If the transporter does not do this then there must be a clear and documented procedure for who takes responsibility for this task.
- Once loading starts the transporter is wholly responsible for the welfare of the birds until they are unloaded.
- Birds with skin wounds or worse should not be transported.
- Any bird suffering from a prolapse near the cloaca (vent) is unfit for transport.
- Poultry are particularly prone to thermal stress and remedial action may need to be taken (see Defra publication “Livestock Transport Vehicles – A Guide to Best Practice for Vehicle Ventilation” ref PB11260).

Journey Times (there are no changes to existing journey times):

- Journey times must be kept to a minimum
- Journey time does not include time spent loading and unloading
- When transporting adult birds on journeys of up to 12 hours there is no requirement to provide food or water
- When transporting chicks on journeys of up to 24 hours there is no requirement to provide food or water provided the journey is completed within 72 hours after hatching

Fitness to Travel:

You must be able to recognise signs of good and ill health, and signs of stress in poultry for which you have responsibility.

Vehicle and Loading Facility

Vehicles and loading facilities must be well designed, constructed and maintained. They must be roadworthy and have no sharp protrusions or be defective in any other way so as to cause injury and suffering. The vehicle should have:

- sufficient ventilation for all of the birds
- floor, roof and sides that are weatherproof and prevent escape
- access to inspect the birds and fixed or portable lighting
- stacked containers must be stable and secure
- appropriate equipment for loading and unloading
- non-slip floor.

Poultry Container/ Crate Requirements

Containers/ crates must:

- be of an appropriate design and maintained in good structural condition
- be free from sharp edges and projections
- be able to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected
- provide a floor with sufficient grip
- provide sufficient space

Catching and Handling

The following methods of handling are not allowed:

- striking or kicking birds
- applying pressure to sensitive parts of the body that causes pain or suffering
- suspending by mechanical means
- lifting or dragging by head or neck, (and should not carry by wing or tail feathers)
- using prods or implements with pointed ends
- obstructing birds, which are being driven, on purpose.

Catching and carrying should be done as appropriate to the species. Normally, carrying by both legs, or whole body, would be the most acceptable methods.

Additionally, for short journeys (over 65km, approx 40 miles, and up to 8 hours):

Animal Transporter Authorisation

Farmers (or the farm/ haulage business) must hold a 'Type 1' transporter authorisation. This is issued by Animal Health (previously the State Veterinary Service) and lasts for 5 years. To apply for an authorisation call Animal Health on 0845 603 8395 or visit the Defra website. To successfully obtain one you must be able to demonstrate that you have no record of serious infringements of animal welfare legislation in the last 3 years.

Certification of Competence

From 5 January 2008, transporters or attendants using road vehicles to transport poultry, in connection with an economic activity, on short journeys (over 65km and up to 8 hours) will need to hold Certificate of Competence for short journeys. For further details, contact NPTC on 024 7685 7300 or information@nptc.org.uk.

Animal Transport Certificate (ATC)

As is the case now, an ATC must be completed for every journey. It must detail:

- Details of animal ownership and transporter
- Date and time first animal loaded and last animal unloaded
- Date and time of departure
- Estimated duration of journey
- Health status of animals

There is no prescribed format for the information required to be presented. Any other document containing the required information may be used, if preferred.

The ATC must be retained by the transporter for 6 months following the journey.

For further information and advice, please contact:

Defra (www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare)

NFU (www.nfuonline.com)

NPTC (www.nptc.org.uk)