

Application of EU Regulations in countries outside the European Union

1) EU-Certification of slaughter plants

All slaughter plants in third party countries that want to export their meat to the European Union, have to obtain an EU certification. The EU certification is meant to ensure that the plant is in compliance with certain minimum standards regarding animal welfare, animal health and food safety.

EU (FVO) Inspections

“Non-EU countries are regularly included in the Food and Veterinary Office's inspection programme. The purpose of these inspections is to evaluate standards in establishments exporting meat to the EU, and in particular the performance of the competent authority in ensuring that these standards are met. Animal welfare is always assessed during these inspections. Not every establishment is inspected - visits to establishments are carried out in order to see a representative sample of the establishments under the control of a competent authority.” (Carol Franklin, Health & Consumers Directorate-General, SANCO-INFO@ec.europa.eu)

EU Inspections are based on EU Regulation (EC) NO 882/2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare.

Article 39 states: „Community controls in third countries are required in order to verify compliance or equivalence with Community feed and food law as well as with the legislation on animal health and, where appropriate, welfare“.

This language makes it very clear that while animal welfare is considered, it is not a priority for the FVO inspectors.

2) EU Animal Transport Regulations:

Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport does not apply in third countries. Contrary to the claims of certain horse meat distributors, the EU has no influence on transport conditions in production countries:

„All EU approved slaughterhouses in non EU countries are also inspected for equivalent welfare conditions. The reason we apply this legislation to non EU countries is because the other countries certify that EU welfare conditions have been respected in the slaughterhouse. We are not able to apply other EU welfare legislation (farm and transport) outside the EU.” (Terence Cassidy, Veterinary Inspector at FVO)

Unfortunately, animal transport regulations in countries such as the United States, Mexico, Canada and Argentina do not provide sufficient protection.

For a detailed comparison of Mexican, Canadian, US, Swiss and EU animal transport laws, please see Annex 2.1. to 2.3.