

Transport of Livestock

Policy

The New Zealand Veterinary Association believes that animals should only be transported when their welfare can be appropriately managed. Transport should not be the cause of an animal's welfare deteriorating.

Background

1. Legislation

The Animal Welfare Act 1999 requires that animals must not be transported in a manner which causes 'unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.' Under Section 23 of the Animal Welfare Act, it is an offence if the person in charge or the owner, transports an animal in a condition that renders it unfit for such transport.

The Transport within New Zealand, Code of Welfare 1 October 2018 (the Code), provides greater detail and information on the matters which should be taken into account when selecting animals for transport.

Further to this, the Code states (ref Minimum Standard 6 g) 'animals must not be transported if they display any injuries, signs of disease, abnormal behaviour or physical abnormalities that could compromise their welfare during the journey, unless a veterinary declaration of fitness for transport has been completed.'

A veterinarian should be consulted where there is any question over whether or not an animal is fit for transport. Following thorough examination and obtaining a history, the veterinarian may certify in writing that he/she considers the animal is fit for transport to the destination without suffering unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.

Veterinary certification of the fitness of animals for transport is a key component in protecting the welfare of animals with various conditions and abnormalities. This is of importance for the animals being certified, for the integrity of the veterinary profession, and for ensuring international confidence in New Zealand's animal welfare system.

Fitness for Transport Veterinary Certificate pads can be ordered from the New Zealand Veterinary Association.

2. Regulation

In addition to the Code, the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018 (hereafter, "the Regulations") specify conditions affecting animals that constitute infringement offences when those animals are transported, or if they are transported without a discretionary veterinary certificate.



Veterinarians and farmers need to be aware of these conditions, and veterinarians need to be able to provide appropriate advice to their clients regarding an animal's fitness for transport. Where appropriate, veterinary certification may be provided.

The Regulations became law October 1st 2018. The owner, or person in charge of an animal with any of the conditions (as defined by the Regulations) listed below, may not transport those animals unless it is accompanied by a veterinary certificate that specifies transport conditions that manage the welfare risks associated with transport.

- Ingrown horns (Regulation 38)
- Bleeding horns or antlers (Regulation 39)
- Lameness (Regulation 40) (relates to cattle, deer, pigs, sheep, and goats)
- Late term pregnancy (Regulation 41)
- Injured or diseased udders (Regulation 42)
- Eye cancer (Regulation 43)

Infringement notices arising from non-compliance with these regulations may be issued to the supplier (farmer) who chooses to transport an animal without a veterinary certificate. **If deemed fit for transport by a veterinarian according to the law and recognised guidelines and accompanied by a valid veterinary certificate, the transporter and the supplier are afforded indemnity (notwithstanding Reg. 45) for transporting an animal with a condition defined by the Regulations.**

Regulations 30, 31 and 32 relate to injury during transport – when offences occur relating to these regulations, the transporter may be liable and possibly infringed:

- Transport injuries (Regulation 30)
- Animals with horns or antlers (Regulation 31; also supplier)
- Transport abrasions (back-rub) (Regulation 32)

Non-compliance with any transport conditions stipulated on a veterinary certificate constitutes an offence (Regulation 45), and the transporter may be liable.



Guidelines for Veterinary Certification of Animals for Transport

Introduction:

- **Veterinary certification is always discretionary – that is, it is the individual veterinarian’s decision whether or not to certify animal as fit for transport, having obtained enough information to facilitate that decision.**
- **This Guideline should inform that decision, as must the law and the VCNZ’s Code of Professional Conduct.**
- **Animal history, veterinary consultation, and clinical examination with written notes (including a differential/definitive diagnosis) are required in every instance prior to writing a fitness for transport certificate.**
- **Veterinary discretion and professional judgement is required in each instance.**
- **Gather evidence (photos and/or videos) and consult MPI VS where necessary.**
- **Record details of all communications.**

In cases where there are issues or concerns about the appropriateness of veterinary certification, or conditions stipulated/not stipulated, there will be a response from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to the certifying veterinarian. In most instances feedback/education is likely sufficient to prevent repeat incidents. For serious incidents, or recurring veterinary certification issues, the matter may be referred to the Veterinary Council of New Zealand.

General principles regarding veterinary certification of fitness for transport:

- Transport is inherently stressful for livestock.
- Distance and time affect welfare during transport and arrival condition:
 - Time and distance **SHOULD be as short as possible**;
 - The animal **SHOULD** go directly from the farm to the **nearest appropriate slaughter premise**;
 - **When this is not possible, the veterinarian MUST contact the MPI VS veterinarian prior to transport**;
 - The location of the slaughter premises **MUST** be stated.
- If the health of an animal is already compromised prior to transport, the process of transportation may exacerbate the condition. Steep ramps, travel fatigue and hard ground are a reality through to slaughter.
- The best the animal is likely to look is off pasture, in the yard, at the farm.
- Certified animals should be capable of travelling such that they arrive at their destination in a state similar to that when examined.
 - A farmer must seek veterinary re-examination if the animal’s condition deteriorates from examination to loading date (per the agreement on the signed declaration)
 - Additional travel conditions may be stipulated on the certificate.



- Assuming appropriate transport, an animal must not be certified, if it is likely to deteriorate during travel.
- Video/photographic evidence of the animal's condition should be gathered at the time of examination.
- Consideration should be given to whether the animal received adequate and reasonable treatment and attention on that farm for the condition.
- When uncertain, or pressured to certify, seek a second opinion and/or more information from:
 - Another colleague
 - MPI VS at the slaughter plant (if transport is to slaughter)
 - Include photos and videos
 - Obtain clinical examination information, including history and treatment history where possible.
 - Record in your own clinical notes any discussions made with MPI VS
 - NZVA Fitness for Transport Guidelines
- A veterinary certificate is valid for a maximum of 7 days, from the date of clinical examination.
 - A shorter period of validity may be more appropriate to the condition.
 - In certain situations, a longer period (to a maximum of 10days) may be valid, however this is an exception to the rule, and needs careful consideration
- The condition of the animal should not significantly deteriorate before the animal is transported. The person-in-charge declaration on the certification requires further veterinary advice should deterioration occur.
- The certifying veterinarian may specify additional transport conditions if these are appropriate.
- Veterinarians **MUST** comply with the Veterinary Council of New Zealand Code of Professional Conduct, which states 'Veterinarians must maintain the integrity of certification.'

If an animal is deemed to be unfit for transport, the veterinarian must ensure that the animal receives treatment that alleviates any unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress being suffered by the animal immediately or humanely slaughtered on that property as soon as practical. Appropriate treatment/management may include rest and time, in addition to other treatment options; this should be documented in the clinical notes made by the veterinarian.



Selecting animals for transport

The Transport within New Zealand – Animal Welfare Code of Welfare 2016 has minimum standards to guide appropriate selection of animals for transport:

- (a) Proper care must be taken when deciding whether it is appropriate to transport young, old, pregnant or otherwise physiologically or behaviourally compromised animals.
- (b) Animals must not be transported if they are likely to give birth during the journey or be affected by metabolic complications of late pregnancy as a result of the journey.
- (c) Animals must not be transported unless they are fit enough to withstand the entire journey without suffering unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.
- (d) Animals to be transported must be able to stand and to bear weight on all limbs.
- (da) Lambe cattle, deer, pigs, sheep, and goats must not be transported, except as allowed by Regulation 40 of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018.
- (e) An animal with horns or antlers must not be transported in a manner that allows the animal to seriously injure itself or another animal.
- (f) Animals with a bleeding, discharging, or broken (and unhealed) velvet antler, horn, or pedicle must not be transported, except as allowed by Regulation 39 of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018.
- (fa) Animals must not be transported within seven days of being castrated or having their tail docked.
- (g) Animals must not be transported if they display any injuries, signs of disease, abnormal behaviour or physical abnormalities that could compromise their welfare during the journey, unless a veterinary declaration of fitness for transport has been completed.^

^this is discretionary, per the Introduction, above.

Lameness

Refer to the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018 for full wording and definitions, but note that the Regulations refer to lame cattle, sheep, deer, pigs and goats.

A lame cattle beast, deer or pig is one that is not weight bearing on one or more limbs when moving or standing, or has a definite limp that is clearly identified to a limb or limbs.

A lame sheep or goat is one that is not weight bearing on one or more limbs when moving or when standing, or has difficulty walking and holds its head below its backline almost continually.

A person in charge of a lame cattle beast, sheep, deer, pig or goat commits an offence against the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018 if they permit the animal to be transported.

Except:

- if the animal is being transported to a place (within 20km) for treatment.
- if the animal is accompanied by a veterinary certificate stating that the animal is fit for transport or specifying the conditions under which it is acceptable to transport the animal.



When considering whether to issue a certification of fitness for transport for any lame animal (regardless of species), veterinarians should refer to the [DairyNZ lameness scoring system \(DNZ LSS\)](#), which grades lameness on a scale of 0 to 3.

This scoring system can be applied over all animal species:

Grade	Certification Advice
0	Not lame; no veterinary certification required
1*	May require veterinary certification; animals are able to be certified as fit for transport.
2	These animals should only be certified as fit for transport when transport will not cause unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress; additional transport conditions may be specified to protect the animal's welfare.
3	These animals are not fit for transport, and should not be certified for transport

*Note definitions for different species' lameness in the Regulations. If these criteria are not met, strictly speaking, no certification is required for transport. Veterinarians can, however, expect farmers to seek advice on this.

Additionally, when certifying lame sheep and goats consider the following criteria:

- Lines of lame sheep (>10% of the mob lame) should be considered for discretionary veterinary certification.
- The veterinarian must ensure that:
 - The sheep can bear weight adequately on all 4 legs (i.e. there are no three-legged lame sheep; no more than grade 2 on DNZ LSS)
 - There are no excessively over grown hooves (i.e. no snow-shoe type feet)
 - There is no bleeding or obvious discharge from feet
 - The sheep meet a minimum standard of body condition (i.e. not emaciated)

Inspection process from the certifying veterinarian involves walking the sheep passed, and giving enough time to assess the feet and weight bearing capabilities. It is not practical to get individual identification. An accurate tally and description of the mob to be transported is sufficient.

Footrot/scald will be differentiated from other causes of lameness (e.g. foot abscess, injury, fractures, dislocations). For individual animals where there is clear and significant pathology associated with the lameness, which is consistent with the regulation's lameness definition, an immediate infringement notice is likely.

If veterinary advice is sought prior to transporting a lame animal for the purpose of further treatment (within 20km), the lame animal/s must be given adequate pain relief and/or immobilisation (physical and/or chemical). If this cannot be achieved sufficiently (e.g. fractures; dislocations, other severe injury) to prevent unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress, the animal should not be transported, and other options used to relieve welfare compromise.

There may be cases where an animal has an abnormal gait or imperfect mobility not involving pain or distress (e.g. an animal with a healed, amputated claw). Such cases may be eligible for transport providing the animal can bear weight and walk without pain, and is not likely to suffer pain or distress during transport or loading/unloading.



The lameness regulation also defines that animals (relates to cattle, deer or pigs) are **NOT** lame if the condition is non-painful (i.e. conformational fault, gait abnormality, healed injury) AND the animal can bear weight on all four limbs. The regulations does not require that these animals are accompanied by a veterinary certificate, though farmers may still request a fitness for transport certificate, to ensure Section 23 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 is not breached (i.e. the animal must still be fit to transport, irrespective of the non-lame criteria).

Other Considerations

Veterinarians may be asked to provide a fitness for transport declaration for animals with healed injuries that knowingly did not receive treatment at the time of injury, and would have significantly compromised the animal's welfare at the time. This is unacceptable and contravenes the Animal Welfare Act 1999, if the owner/person in charge has not provided appropriate treatment for the animal to manage pain and distress.

Part of a fitness for transport examination should include the history of how the animal was managed at the time of the injury. A veterinary certificate should not be provided in cases where an animal did not receive appropriate treatment to manage pain and distress.

References

1. Animal Welfare Act 1999
2. Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018
3. DairyNZ Lameness Scoring System
4. Dairy Cattle - Code of Welfare 2016 (BCS reference)
5. Sheep and Beef Cattle - Code of Welfare 2015 (BCS references)
6. Transport within New Zealand – Animal Welfare Code of Welfare 2016
7. Veterinary Council of New Zealand – Code of Professional Conduct



Appendix 1 - Conditions Affecting Fitness for Transport

Note: descriptive words (e.g. distended, enlarged, minor, significant etc.) are subjective, and hard to define; accordingly, photographic and video evidence and communication with MPI VS is recommended where any doubt exists about fitness for transport.

Conditions in any animal

Conditions making an animal unacceptable for transport

Because welfare of the animals in question is compromised by the following conditions, NZVA does not support their certification as being fit for transport, as transport is likely to cause unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress. Secondly, although a veterinarian is not required to make a judgement about fitness for human consumption, if an animal's fitness is unlikely to be suitable, it should not be subjected to unnecessary travel, prior to being condemned.

- i. Acute systemic infection (e.g. is sick or showing evidence of an acute infectious disease).
- ii. Acute or chronic skin infections (including photosensitisation) which are extensive, infected or raw.
- iii. Any purulent discharge.
- iv. Injuries that cause and/or exacerbate welfare compromise during transport:
 - a. Acute injury or wound.
 - b. Chronic injury or wound, not substantially healed
 - c. Injuries that are multiple, extensive or infected, at any depth (e.g. dog bite, shearing injuries).
- v. An animal which is recumbent and unable to stand, or likely to become recumbent.
- vi. Abdominal conditions that are likely to be associated with unnecessary or unreasonable pain and or distress (e.g. abdominal hernia, intussusception, intestinal torsion/volvulus, uterine torsion).
- vii. Penile/preputial conditions where there is haemorrhage, swelling, abscessation, or significant discharge.
- viii. Blindness in one or both eyes such that distress and/or injury is likely as a result of blindness.
- ix. Retained foetal membranes.
- x. Prolapsed uterus, vagina, or rectum (e.g. rectal prolapse in grower pigs).
- xi. Pathologies that preclude urination and defecation (e.g. rectal strictures in pigs).
- xii. Fly strike.
- xiii. Excess coat (i.e. wool/hair/fibre) length that could lead to heat stress during transport.
- xiv. Grossly enlarged or distend udders.
- xv. Conditions that would have responded to veterinary treatment but where wilful neglect has caused suffering including unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.
- xvi. Any condition not listed where there is obvious unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.



Conditions where discretionary veterinary certification may be appropriate

1. Conditions included in the Care & Procedure Regulations 2018
2. Other Conditions

Some conditions, as identified in the Regulations, may attract infringement notices or fines for the supplier/farmer if animals with these conditions are transported without a valid veterinary certificate. For other conditions, farmers may engage veterinary advice with the view to receiving a discretionary veterinary certificate prior to transport.

Animals arriving at a slaughter premise, with a fully completed certificate, indicating a thorough clinical examination, history and when good communication has occurred with MPIVS at the premises, are likely to be favourably received by MPI VS.

Note: MPIVS have animal welfare procedures to support a consistent response by VS veterinarians whether or not diseased, defective or injured animals are accompanied by a veterinary certificate. The MPIVS procedures substantially mirror these NZVA guidelines. Any of the conditions defined in these guidelines can range in severity and can deteriorate with time and transport hence the emphasis on photographic and video evidence and communication between the clinician and the VS veterinarian.

REMEMBER:

- **Veterinary certification is always discretionary – that is, it is the individual veterinarian’s decision whether or not to certify animal as fit for transport, having obtained enough information to facilitate that decision.**
- **This Guideline should inform that decision, as must the law and the VCNZ’s Code of Professional Conduct.**
- **Animal history, veterinary consultation, and clinical examination with written notes (including a differential/definitive diagnosis) are required in every instance prior to writing a fitness for transport certificate.**
- **Veterinary discretion and professional judgement is required in each instance.**
- **Gather evidence (photos and/or videos) and consult MPI VS where necessary.**
- **Record details of all communications.**

1. Conditions included in the Care & Procedure Regulations 2018:

- i. An animal that has an in-growing horn that is piercing or inflaming any part of the animal’s body or causing a skin abrasion (Regulation 38).
- ii. An animal with a bleeding, discharging, or broken (and unhealed) velvet antler, horn or pedicle (Regulation 39).
- iii. A lame animal. For cattle, deer or pigs, lame means unable to bear weight on all four limbs, or has a definite limp that is clearly identified to a limb or limbs; or for sheep and goats, not weight bearing on one or more limbs when moving or when standing, or has difficulty walking and holds its head below its backline almost continually (Regulation 40).



- iv. An animal in late pregnancy – an animal that gives birth to viable young during transport or within 24 hours after transport to a sale yard or slaughter premises (Regulation 41; **note variation for deer**).
- v. An animal with an injured or diseased udder. This includes necrotic udders, an udder that has a discharge other than milk, an udder that shows signs of inflammation (red, hot, swollen), an udder with a lesion that is bleeding or discharging (Regulation 42).
- vi. An animal with eye cancer, unless accompanied by a veterinary certificate. This applies to an eye cancer that is not confined to the eye/eyelid, bleeding or discharging, or that is causing the eye to discharge, or an eye cancer that is more than 2 cm diameter (Regulation 43).

2. Other conditions

In some instances, an animal with the following conditions may be transported, provided a valid and considered veterinary certificate is provided.

- i. Body condition score below those defined as acceptable in the relevant Code of Welfare for that species. Refer to [MPI Codes of Welfare](#).
 - a. Refer to species specific BCS requirements, including MPI VS's expectations in Appendix 2
- ii. Acute pinkeye with serous or mucopurulent discharge.
- iii. Minor penile/preputial conditions provided the animal is able to urinate, and the penis is unlikely to sustain further injury during transport.



Species-Specific Conditions Affecting Fitness for Transport

Bovine

Conditions making a bovine unacceptable for transport

- i. As for any animal (see above)
- ii. Conditions included in the Care and Procedure Regulations 2018

Conditions where transport needs discretionary veterinary certification

- i. Conditions included in the Care and Procedure Regulations 2018, where provision of discretionary veterinary certification is detailed
- ii. Woody tongue and lumpy jaw (BCS must be adequate).
- i. Lactating cows at risk of developing acute metabolic problems
 - a. Where recommended measures have not been taken, or industry standards not met which minimise this risk, veterinary certificates should not be provided.
- ii. Cows in late gestation
 - a. Ideally, cows in last 4 weeks of gestation (use Planned Start of Calving) should not be transported for longer than 2 hours.
 - i. Before certifying late gestation cows as fit for transport, veterinarians must be confident that the welfare of the cows can be protected (per section 23 of the Animal Welfare Act)
 - ii. Veterinarians should satisfy themselves that the destination is appropriate for receiving cows in late gestation (i.e. facilities and environment)
 - iii. With careful consideration of the above, in some instances, transport for longer periods may be acceptable (i.e. from run-off to home farm)
 - b. During the last 3 months of pregnancy, veterinary certification should require:
 - i. Maximum journey time of 8 hrs
 - ii. Rest periods of 12 hrs between every 8 hours of travel
 - iii. Reduced stocking density on the truck
 - iv. Transport on bottom deck, top deck only suitable if ramp slope is less than 20° (1:3)



Ovine & Caprine

Conditions making an ovine/caprine unacceptable for transport

- i. As for any animal (see above)
- ii. Conditions included in the Care and Procedure Regulations 2018

Conditions where transport needs discretionary veterinary certification*

- i. Conditions included in the Care and Procedure Regulations 2018, where provision of discretionary veterinary certification is detailed

Cervine

Conditions making a cervine unacceptable for transport

- i. As for any animal (see above)
- ii. Conditions included in the Care and Procedure Regulations 2018
 - a. Note Regulation 39 allows transport of spikers in some circumstances
- iii. Recently velvetted stags/bleeding antler stubs/broken velvet antler.
 - a. Stags should not be sent for slaughter within seven days of velvetting.
- iv. Velvet or hard antler exceeding 110mm measured from the centre of the skull between the pedicles.
- v. Overly aggressive deer that may cause injury to themselves, other deer or their handlers.
- vi. Deer (dams or fawns) that have been weaned for less than 10 days.

Conditions where transport needs discretionary veterinary certification*

- i. Conditions included in the Care and Procedure Regulations 2018, where provision of discretionary veterinary certification is detailed

Porcine animals

Conditions making a porcine unacceptable for transport

- i. As for any animal. (see above)
- ii. Conditions included in the Care and Procedure Regulations 2018

Conditions where transport needs discretionary veterinary certification

- i. Conditions included in the Care and Procedure Regulations 2018, where provision of discretionary veterinary certification is detailed
- ii. Aural haematomas that are of sufficient size that damage or rupture is likely during transport.



Species-Specific Body Condition Scores

For all species, discretionary veterinary certification for transport may be requested to facilitate urgent remedial action; if this involves transport to a slaughter premise, contact MPI VS before certifying.

BOVINE:

- i. Animals with a body condition score (BCS) at or below the level requiring 'urgent remedial action' as per the relevant Code of Welfare for that species
 - a. Do not certify at BCS 1 for beef cattle (0-5 scale)
 - b. Do not certify **below** BCS 3 for dairy cattle (1-10 scale)

OVINE and CAPRINE:

- i. Animals with Body Condition Score (BCS) at or below the level requiring 'urgent remedial action' as per the relevant Code of Welfare for that species:
 - a. Do not certify at BCS 1 for sheep (0-5 scale)
 - b. Do not certify at BCS 1 for goats (0-5 scale)

CERVINE:

- i. Animals with Body Condition Score (BCS) at or below the level requiring 'urgent remedial action' as per the relevant Code of Welfare for that species:
 - a. Do not certify **below** BSC 2 for deer (0-5 scale)

PORCINE:

- i. Animals with Body Condition Score (BCS) at or below the level requiring 'urgent remedial action' as per the relevant Code of Welfare for that species:
 - a. Do not certify **below** BCS 2 for pigs (1-5 scale)