

Dear ETRA Committee

Senedd Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee - Legislative Consent: Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill

NFU Cymru champions Welsh agriculture and represents farmers throughout Wales and across all sectors. NFU Cymru's vision is for a productive, profitable, and progressive farming sector producing world renowned climate-friendly food in an environment and landscape that provides habitats for our nature to thrive with Welsh food and farming delivering economic, environmental, cultural, and social benefits for all the people of Wales whilst meeting our ambition for net zero agriculture by 2040.

We are pleased to be able to provide the Committee with this submission in order to help inform its scrutiny of the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill currently before the UK Parliament

1. The United Kingdom and Wales has some of the highest standards of animal welfare in the world and it is one of the largest livestock producers in Europe, worth some £14.7 billion to the UK economy each year¹. Protecting livestock during all stages of the production cycle, including during any transport, consignment for slaughter and further rearing, is a top priority for Wales' farmers.
2. Compared to the export of fresh and frozen meat, live export from GB is a small but nonetheless important component of the sector. In 2022, the UK exported a total value of £751million live animals².
3. Very few of NFU Cymru's members would be in a position where they arrange for the live export (for slaughter) of the animals which they produce, rather it would typically be the purchaser of such animals who might do so, often aggregating an export consignment of animals from a number of different primary producers.
4. Although comparatively few Welsh animals are exported live, and typically our members would not themselves be directly involved with the live export of animals, the fact that there has been a live export market has been of considerable importance to the sector.
5. The fact is that live exports of finished animals for slaughter provides much needed competition in the marketplace, something which is of particular relevance when livestock numbers are high on the domestic market (peak season) and market prices are under pressure.

¹ <https://www.nfuonline.com/archive?treeid=104972>

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/balanceofpayments/bulletins/uktrade/may2023#explore-uk-trade-in-goods-country-by-commodity-data-for-2022>

6. Imports of New Zealand and Australian lamb during the British peak season can reduce domestic demand and price. Maintaining the ability to export live animals boosts competition and supports farm gate prices.
7. Despite the fact that the UK and Welsh Governments want farmers to secure more of their returns from the marketplace, to realise these enhanced returns the markets must be there in the first place, and with the closing off of the export avenue and important outlet for Welsh farmers has been closed off.
8. Since leaving the European Union, the UK has not exported any live animals for slaughter due to the lack of EU Border Control Posts approved for, or accepting, live animal exports at any UK facing port on the north European coast. Furthermore, outside of the EU's single market it is of course open to the UK government to legislate to end live exports for slaughter and/or fattening if it so wishes.
9. The majority of UK and Welsh live exports are breeding animals. Our high quality and high genetic merit stock is in demand across the EU, and access to this market for breeding is critical. Much of this trade would resume if a Border Control Post were established on routes via Dover passenger ferries.
10. NFU Cymru is disappointed by the introduction of The Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill at the end of 2023 by the UK Government. We believe that the introduction of such a ban on live exports is misguided.
11. The Animal Welfare Bill would not prevent live animals destined for slaughter in the UK coming into Wales from Ireland via the ports in Holyhead, Fishguard and Milford Haven. Whilst there is no such traffic in live animals at the present time, there is nothing to prevent it potentially happening in future.
12. Further to this, the Animal Welfare Bill also comes at a time when the UK Government has either concluded or is pursuing trade negotiations with countries which export large numbers of animals for fattening and/or slaughter and have lower standards of animal welfare in their production systems.
13. Instead of the ban outlined in the Animal Welfare Bill, NFU Cymru would instead advocate instead for a live export assurance scheme to ensure our high standards of welfare continue across borders. This would have benefits including:
 - Protecting livestock during transport for different purposes, including consignment for slaughter and further rearing, which is relevant to sheep, beef, and dairy farmers.
 - Providing assurance for all aspects of the process from farm or collection centre to point of slaughter.
14. There has been a huge amount of research on welfare in transport and studies consistently show the length of journey is not a key factor in protecting welfare at slaughter. It follows that the crossing of a land or sea border itself is not an objective factor to consider when safeguarding welfare.

15. The following areas are agreed by experts to be the most important welfare factors when it comes to the transportation of animals.
- Stockmanship at key contact points such as loading and unloading,
 - Quality of the journey (which includes smooth movements and stable environments constant ideal temperatures)
 - Access to clean safe drinking water
 - Rest periods
 - Grouping animals appropriate to their species, age, size etc.
16. There is extensive guidance on the Welsh Government website as to the regulations governing the transport of a range of different species of farm animals³
17. The rules in the Welsh regulation requires everyone transporting animals on any journey to ensure that:
- No one shall transport animals, or cause them to be transported, in a way likely to cause them injury or undue suffering.
 - Journey times are kept to a minimum.
 - The animals are fit to travel.
 - Those handling animals are trained and competent.
 - The vehicle and its loading & unloading facilities are designed, constructed, and maintained to avoid injury and suffering and to ensure the safety of the animals.
 - Water, feed, and opportunity to rest are given to the animals as appropriate and sufficient floor space and height is available in the transport.
18. With the statutory safeguards outlined in place, and the proposed development of a live export assurance scheme to ensure that our high standards of animal welfare can continue across borders, NFU Cymru believes that our farmers should be able to sell into the live export market in order to stimulate competition for our top quality livestock and to ensure that they have access to the best paying markets, be that at home or abroad.
19. We trust that this submission clearly sets out NFU Cymru's position with regard to the live export of farm animals.

³ [Animal welfare | Sub-topic | GOV.WALES](#)