



## **Press release**

Friday, 28 April 2006

# **Countdown To Callous Calf Trade**

After a ten-year ban, live calf and cattle exports to the European continent are to resume next week. United in their concern for the welfare implications for thousands of young calves, the RSPCA and Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) are calling for alternatives to resumption of the trade.

“It is extraordinary that these very young calves can be transported abroad to be reared in conditions that have long been illegal in the UK,” says David Bowles, the RSPCA’s Head of External Affairs. “Although cramped veal crates will effectively be banned in the EU from the end of this year, they can still be in use today and, even in the alternative group housing systems, slatted floors are permitted – with no comfortable resting area or bedding.”

Dr Julia Wrathall, RSPCA Head of Farm Animals, adds: “An extra concern is that both the existing and forthcoming new EU law on transporting live animals allow calves as young as two weeks old to be in transit for nine hours with a water/feed break of just one hour, followed by another nine or more hours on the road.”

Rowen West-Henzell of CIWF explains: “The sea crossing to the continent is likely to cause extra stress to calves, as it adds to the complexity of the journey. And transporting them over significant distances raises the risk of disease in young calves as they are not developed enough to cope with the stress of transport before they are at least one month old.”

“Many people thought that this trade had ended permanently in 1996, when the ban was put in place because of BSE,” Rowen continues. “Sadly, it seems that the time has not been used productively by the industry to develop more welfare-friendly alternatives to a resumption of the export trade.”

The RSPCA and CIWF are calling for:

- the dairy industry (from which most veal calves are sourced) to seek alternative outlets for excess dairy-bred calves
- the British Government to explore financial support mechanisms for rearing dairy-bred calves under higher welfare conditions within the UK and to end live exports
- the EU to agree higher welfare standards for live animal transport, taking into account available knowledge of the effect of transport on the health and welfare of young animals
- the public (even if they are not thinking of buying veal) to ask retailers, caterers and restaurateurs, wherever veal is offered, where the veal comes from. If it is not UK veal, mention that the chances are that the veal could have been reared under conditions illegal in the UK and ask them to source only humanely reared veal.

The RSPCA and CIWF will be represented at protests at Dover docks next week.

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