Observatory Thematic Study

Animal Welfare During Transport by Land or Sea: How Members' Veterinary Services Are Implementing Welfare Standards

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Executive Summary

This thematic study, conducted by the WOAH Observatory in collaboration with the Standards Department, provides a global assessment of how standards by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) related to animal welfare during transport by land and sea are being implemented, as reported by Animal Welfare Focal Points (AWFPs). The study was carried out in two phases. Phase 1 consisted of a global quantitative survey of AWFPs. Phase 2 involved qualitative interviews and focus groups to explore practical experiences, barriers and success factors influencing implementation.

Objectives

The study had four primary objectives:

1. To assess the existence and characteristics of regulatory frameworks governing animal welfare during transport by land and sea as reported by AWFPs.
2. To evaluate the presence and characteristics of enforcement mechanisms supporting these frameworks.
3. To identify barriers and success factors influencing the uptake and operationalisation of WOAH transport standards from the perspective of AWFPs.
4. To develop practical recommendations to support improved alignment and implementation globally.

The study contributes to ongoing revisions of the *Terrestrial Code* chapters related to animal welfare during transport by sea and land, Chapters 7.2 and 7.3 respectively, and supports the implementation objectives of the WOAH Global Strategy on Animal Welfare.

Methods

Phase 1. Quantitative Survey

A structured 49-question online survey was distributed to all 183 WOAH AWFPs. The survey examined:

- The scale and importance of animal transport by land and sea.
- The presence and scope of regulatory frameworks.
- Approval requirements for vehicles, vessels and facilities.
- Defined responsibilities across actors in the transport chain.
- Journey planning requirements and contingency planning.
- Enforcement mechanisms and inspection practices.
- Use of non-legislative guidance.
- Perceived prioritisation of animal welfare during transport.

Ninety-six AWFPs responded, representing a 52% response rate. Data were cleaned and analysed descriptively using percentage distributions and regional comparisons.

Phase 2. Qualitative Investigation

Sixteen in-depth interviews were conducted across all WOAH regions, followed by two focus groups involving nine AWFPs. Participants were selected to ensure geographic diversity and representation of varied regulatory contexts.

Interviews explored:

- Integration of WOAH standards into national systems.
- Practical enforcement realities.
- Governance, political and infrastructure constraints.
- Success factors supporting alignment.
- Future support needs.
- Focus groups validated themes and explored forward-looking solutions.

Results

The results of this analysis (Phases 1 and 2) reflect the perceptions of the AWFP respondents directly engaged in this work and do not necessarily represent the views or positions of WOAH Members.

Phase 1. Regulatory Frameworks and Enforcement

Among AWFPs reporting transport activity, 78% indicated having a regulatory framework covering animal welfare during transport by land and 70% for transport by sea. Most frameworks were developed at national level. Europe reported the highest levels of regulatory coverage, while Africa reported comparatively lower coverage, particularly for land transport.

Cattle and small ruminants were the most consistently included species categories. Approval requirements for vehicles and vessels were common, though fewer AWFPs reported approval requirements for facilities or containers.

Defined responsibilities for actors in the transport chain were not universally included, and competence requirements such as formal training or certification were less frequently mandated. Journey planning requirements most commonly included journey duration and space allowance, but weather considerations, road type and detailed contingency planning were less consistently required. Only approximately one third of AWFPs reported having operational checklists in place for land transport.

Among AWFPs who reported having a regulatory framework, 72% reported enforcement mechanisms for land transport and 74% for sea transport. Inspections were most frequently conducted at international border posts and upon arrival. In many cases, inspections were reported as systematic, meaning every consignment is inspected. Risk-based inspection approaches were less commonly reported.

Two-thirds of AWFPs reported developing or using non-legislative guidance for land transport, with lower proportions for sea transport. Animal welfare during transport was most frequently prioritised by competent authorities, but less consistently prioritised by private sector actors and consumers.

Phase 2. Integration, Barriers and Practical Realities

Phase 2 findings provided important depth to the quantitative results. Across interviews and focus groups, AWFPs consistently acknowledged the value and credibility of WOAH transport standards. However, integration into national systems was highly context-dependent.

In jurisdictions with mature legislative systems, WOAH standards were typically used as guiding reference frameworks rather than directly transposed into law. In countries with less developed frameworks, standards were sometimes adopted more directly, but operationalisation proved challenging where infrastructure, inspection capacity or technical guidance were limited. As a result, formal alignment did not always translate into consistent practice.

A central theme was the gap between regulatory intent and operational reality. AWFPs described constraints related to geography, staffing shortages, fragmented responsibilities across ministries and limited inspection capacity. Transport oversight frequently involves multiple authorities, including Veterinary Services, transport ministries, customs agencies and maritime regulators, creating ambiguity around accountability. Political prioritisation was repeatedly identified as a determining factor. In several contexts, animal transport continues to be viewed primarily as a logistical or trade issue rather than a welfare issue, influencing budget allocation and enforcement consistency.

Sea transport emerged as a particularly complex domain. Once animals depart port, veterinary authorities often have limited oversight, as jurisdiction shifts under maritime law. AWFPs described challenges related to voyage duration, climatic conditions, emergency response limitations and reputational risks associated with high-profile incidents. Communication gaps between exporting and importing countries were also identified, limiting feedback on animal condition upon arrival and reducing opportunities for corrective action.

Despite these challenges, AWFPs also described pathways to progress. Strong interagency collaboration, structured legislative review cycles and alignment driven by trade requirements were identified as enablers of improved implementation. Participants valued the outcome-based flexibility of WOAH standards but expressed a clear need for more operationally explicit tools, including training materials, model documentation and plain-language explanations of the scientific basis for specific provisions. There was strong interest in peer learning platforms and regional collaboration mechanisms to support harmonisation and shared problem-solving.

Overall, Phase 2 demonstrated that limitations in implementation are rarely rooted in disagreement with WOAH standards. Rather, they are shaped by governance structures, institutional capacity, infrastructure and political prioritisation.

Recommendations

The findings identify opportunities for both WOAH and its Members.

Opportunities for WOAH

- Strengthen alignment between the Global Animal Welfare Strategy and implementation of welfare transport standards.
- Develop practical operational tools such as model regulations, journey plan templates, contingency guidance and species-specific technical resources.
- Expand train-the-trainer and competency-based training approaches across the transport chain.
- Facilitate peer learning networks and regional platforms to support exchange and harmonisation.
- Strengthen advocacy at leadership level to elevate transport welfare as a strategic issue linked to animal health, trade reputation and public confidence.
- Enhance cross-sector engagement, particularly with maritime authorities.

Opportunities for Members

- Strengthen institutional mandates and clarify cross-ministerial responsibilities.
- Invest in training, certification systems and professional development.
- Improve interagency coordination for maritime oversight.
- Engage actively in WOAH consultative and standard-setting processes.
- Elevate animal welfare during transport within national policy agendas to secure sustained political support and resources.

Conclusion

This study provides a global snapshot of how AWFPs report implementing WOAH standards for animal welfare during transport by land and sea. While most AWFPs indicate the existence of regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms, implementation depth varies considerably across contexts.

Alignment is strongest where political commitment, institutional capacity and inter-agency collaboration converge. Barriers are most pronounced where welfare during transport is deprioritised relative to economic or logistical considerations.

The findings confirm the continued relevance of WOAH transport standards and highlight the importance of enhanced operational guidance, capacity-building, advocacy and peer collaboration. With targeted support and sustained engagement, there is strong potential to improve consistency and effectiveness in animal welfare outcomes during transport globally.

Acknowledgements

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) would like to thank all WOAH Members, Delegates, Animal Welfare Focal Points and other government officials who participated in this project. Without these data, the knowledge and insights presented in this report would not be available. We also wish to thank all WOAH staff from Headquarters and the Regional and Sub-regional Representations who contributed to this report.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

AWFP: Animal Welfare Focal Point
***Terrestrial Animal Health Code*:** The *Terrestrial Code*
Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission: Code Commission
WOAH: World Organisation for Animal Health (founded as OIE)

1. Background & Study Objectives

1.1 Background

Millions of animals are transported globally every day. Most farm animals are transported at least once during their lifetime, either to slaughterhouses, sales or commingling sites – domestically or abroad. Transport of live animals presents significant challenges for animal health and welfare. These challenges include the need to manage stress, minimise disease transmission and ensure proper handling, planning and fitness for transport. Animal welfare during transport is a complex subject that includes scientific, ethical, economic, social and political considerations. Ensuring good welfare outcomes therefore requires coordination and commitment from all actors involved, including farmers, business operators, transporters and competent authorities.

To support Members, WOAH has developed international standards related to animal welfare. The Terrestrial Animal Health Code (the Terrestrial Code) provides provisionsand recommendations for the welfare of terrestrial animals during transport by sea (Chapter 7.2., first adopted in 1998, most recent update adopted in 2008), by land (Chapter 7.3., first adopted in 1998, most recent update adopted in 2011) and by air (Chapter 7.4., first adopted in 1982, most recent update adopted in 2011).

In 2014 and 2022 respectively, both the WOAH Regional Representations for the Americas and for Europe conducted surveys to explore the level of implementation of WOAH standards and best practices related to long-distance transport of live animals, including societal perception and communication aspects. However, given the variability in how these issues are addressed across Members, assessing the implementation of these standards at a global level remains important.

WOAH's Global Strategy on Animal Welfare (adopted in 2017) also recognises transport as one of the priority areas for improvement. In line with this objective and following the Global Animal Welfare Forum on 'Animal transport: a shared responsibility' (2019), the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission included the revision of transport chapters in its work programme. Updated insights into how Members are applying the standards help inform this work and support evidence-based decision-making.

1.2 Study Objectives

The WOAH Observatory was created to provide a systematic, data-driven understanding of how Members implement international standards. It does so by analysing information collected through existing WOAH activities and external sources, and by undertaking thematic studies that explore implementation more deeply. In 2024, the Observatory published preliminary results from Phase 1 of a study assessing the level of implementation of WOAH standards related to animal welfare during transport by land and sea. Phase 1 used a global survey to describe local frameworks, legislation, responsibilities and implementation practices among respondents.

To complement this quantitative assessment, the Observatory and the WOAH Standards Department launched Phase 2 to explore practical experiences with the standards in more detail. This phase used qualitative interviews and focus groups to identify success factors and barriers affecting the uptake of the Terrestrial Code chapters on land and sea transport. The approach provides richer insights into the realities faced by different countries, including regulatory, logistical, cultural and resource-related challenges, as well as factors that support effective implementation. These findings will help WOAH better understand regional diversity, highlight needs for capacity development and support future revisions of relevant chapters of the *Terrestrial Code.*

The purpose of this final report is to describe the results of Phases 1 and 2 of this thematic study and offer practical recommendations to improve the level of implementation of WOAH standards pertaining to animal transportation by land and sea globally. The report integrates information collected from Animal Welfare Focal Points' (AWFPs) responses to the questionnaire, interviews and focus groups to analyse the common challenges faced during implementation and the factors that contribute to success. The objective is to support Members, inform future standard-setting and strengthen global efforts to ensure good animal welfare during transport.

2. Approach & Methodology

2.1. Phase 1: Quantitative Survey

2.1.1. Study design

The first phase of this study was a questionnaire conducted by WOAH. The target respondents were WOAH's AWFPs. The questionnaire was structured in three sections (Appendix A). The two first sections were similarly built to explore, for both transport by land and sea, the importance of animal transport in/from the country, the presence and characteristics of a regulatory framework related to animal welfare during transport, as well as the presence and characteristics of a mechanism to enforce these requirements. The final section aimed at gathering more general information on respondents' prioritisation of standards and enforcement for animal transport and perceived barriers to implementation.

In total, the questionnaire was composed of 49 questions. However, depending on the logical structure of the questionnaire and the answers provided to previous questions, not all respondents were required to answer all questions. Survey questions were mainly presented in closed-ended format (single-answer multiple-choice questions, multiple-answer multiple-choice questions, Likert scale questions, matrix questions, etc.) to increase the comparability of respondent answers. However, several free-text fields were provided to allow respondents to elaborate on their answers. The estimated time to complete each questionnaire was 30 minutes.

The scope of the questionnaire was defined as such: (i) species or group of species covered: cattle, small ruminants, pigs, poultry, equines, buffaloes, camelids; (ii) mode of transport: land and sea; (iii) type of transport: only transport using a vehicle or vessel (i.e. animals travelling by foot are excluded from this study); (iv) time frame: situation as in 2022.

2.1.2. Data collection

The questionnaire was developed using Survey Monkey® software and was made available in the three WOAH official languages (English, French and Spanish). The link to the questionnaire, as well as the PDF and Word copies (to facilitate coordination and data collection), were emailed to all 183 WOAH Delegates and their AWFPs. Responses were collected between 15 November 2023 and 31 December 2023.

2.1.3. Data analysis

Data were first cleaned: duplicates were addressed by contacting the AWFP's concerned and clarifying each duplicate case with them and consolidating inconsistent data. The most meaningful indicators[1] were then identified and respondent answers were quantitatively described, mainly in the form of percentage distributions. The indicator results were interpreted accounting for data limitations. Certain percentage results required careful interpretation as they were based on a small number of respondents. Other limitations were related to the data collection method itself. Potential survey biases have been highlighted throughout the report, where relevant.

2.2. Phase 2: Qualitative Investigation

Phase 2 of this project was conducted by ACER Consulting (a Canadian consulting firm) and consisted of a qualitative investigation aimed at understanding the success factors and barriers involved with implementing WOAH transport standards around the world. This investigation included interviews and focus groups with AWFP's from each WOAH Region and was intended to deeper explore the barriers and/or success factors to the implementation of WOAH standards related to animal welfare during transport.

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[1] A statistical indicator is the representation of statistical data for a specified time, place or any other relevant characteristic, corrected for at least one dimension (usually sample size), to allow for meaningful comparisons. It is a summary measure related to a key issue or phenomenon and derived from a series of observed facts. Indicators can be used to reveal relative positions or show positive or negative changes. Indicators can help set targets and monitor their achievement; they can inform policies, guidelines and activities, among other things. By themselves, indicators do not necessarily contain all aspects of development or change, but they contribute greatly to explaining them. Indicators allow for comparisons over time between, for example, Members and regions. In this way, they assist in gathering evidence for decision making [definition derived from the EU glossary].

2.2.1 Interviews

2.2.1.1. Development of interview discussion guide

An interview discussion guide was developed along with an interview recruitment profile to identify potential interview participants. The interview discussion guide (Appendix B) was drafted by the ACER team and shared with WOAH for review and approval. The interview questions focused on three main areas: (1) understanding the level of integration of WOAH transport standards within the country, (2) identifying the barriers to implementation of WOAH transport standards and (3) identifying any factors that were instrumental in the successful implementation of WOAH transport standards.

2.2.1.2. Identification of interview participants and recruitment

Animal Welfare Focal Points were identified as potential interview participants based on Phase 1 survey results and geographic region, with a goal of selecting five countries from each WOAH Region (Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Middle East). Respondents that indicated willingness to participate in interviews or focus groups during Phase 1 were prioritised, as they had already expressed interest. In preparation for the interviews, participants were also asked to share any documents related to their local animal welfare legislation to support the analysis.

WOAH staff independently reviewed the proposed list and provided final recommendations. In total, 25 AWFPs were selected as interview candidates.

Once interview candidates were identified, a recruitment profile was developed to compile information and assist with interview recruitment. The recruitment profile for each selected country included the name and contact information for the associated WOAH Delegate and AWFP.

While the AWFP was the targeted individual for each interview, WOAH Delegates were first contacted by the WOAH team as an initial introduction. Initial contact with each Delegate was made on June 5th, 2025. Once the Delegate responded to the initial contact from WOAH, a recruitment letter was sent to the Delegate and the AWFP, including a link to a scheduling website (Calendly) to allow the AWFP (or appointed interviewee) to select a date and time for their interview. If no response was received from the initial contact email, two additional follow-ups were sent to schedule an interview.

Some of the contact information identified for AWFP before recruitment began was either no longer valid or in use, the individual had been replaced, or the AWFP contact information was correct, but they did not feel comfortable speaking about the subject and nominated a replacement. In addition, some email addresses appeared to be filtered out by the recipient's firewall, and non-government addresses had to be used to contact the participants. In cases where contact with the identified Delegate and/or AWFP were unsuccessful, the WOAH team attempted to identify updated contact information for representatives. Challenges regarding availability of translators and interviewees were also a factor in terms of the inability of securing an interview with the outstanding AWFPs. No AWFPs directly declined to participate.

2.2.1.3 Conducting interviews

Interviews were estimated to take approximately 60 minutes but were scheduled for 90 minutes to allow for extra time if needed. Interviews were conducted over Zoom, with two interviewers present; one team member led the interview, while the other took detailed notes. Interviews were recorded via Zoom to assist with report writing. Interviewees had received the questions in advance to ensure they could prepare relevant information and documents beforehand.

2.2.2 Focus groups

2.2.2.1 Focus group recruitment and scheduling

Once interviews had been completed, preparations began for focus groups with interview respondents. In each interview, participants were asked if they would be willing to attend a virtual focus group with other AWFPs to discuss the initial findings of the interviews, as well as potential solutions to using and incorporating WOAH standards in the future. Those who indicated that they were interested were contacted for focus group participation. An email was sent out to all interested individuals with a link to an online meeting scheduling poll (Doodle) to help facilitate scheduling. Participants were asked to respond to the poll with their availability, and two focus group sessions would be scheduled accordingly based on majority availability.

Once focus group dates had been scheduled, the participants that indicated that they were available on those dates were sent pre-read documents (Appendix C) to help them prepare. These documents included a copy of the focus group discussion guide, as well as a summary of the preliminary interview themes. Preliminary interview results were summarised into a two-page document to highlight the main themes and findings from the interviews and shared with focus group participants to provide context on 'what we heard' from the interviews.

2.2.2.2 Conducting focus groups

Two focus groups were held with AWFPs on September 30th and October 1st, 2025. The focus groups were scheduled for 120 minutes and hosted by one facilitator and one note taker.

In total, nine of the invited 16 AWFPs participated in a focus group. Two African nations, five AWFPs from the Americas, three from Asia and the Pacific, three from Europe and three from the Middle East participated.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of this analysis (Phases 1 and 2) reflect the perceptions of the AWFP respondents directly engaged in this work, and do not necessarily represent the views or positions of WOAH Members.

3.1 Phase 1: Quantitative Survey

3.1.1 Survey sample

Among the 183 AWFPs contacted, 96 (52%) completed the questionnaire. Detailed results per WOAH region are available in **Table 1**. The highest response rate was found in the Asia–Pacific region.

Table 1. Number of respondents per WOAH region and associated response rate

Region	Number	Percentage
Africa (*n* = 53 AWFP)	21	40%
Americas (*n* = 32 AWFP)	16	50%
Asia–Pacific (*n* = 34 AWFP)	23	68%
Europe (*n* = 52 AWFP)	30	58%
Middle East (*n* = 12 AWFP)	6	50%
Total (*n* = 183 AWFP)	96	52%

3.1.2 Type and importance of animal species transported by land and sea

Among the 96 respondents, one Member indicated not having any transport of the considered animal species category by land. More importantly, 19 AWFPs reported no transport of the considered animal species category by sea. **Figure 1** shows the percentage of AWFPs transporting each of the considered animal species category by (a) land or by (b) sea for domestic or export purposes. Overall, the percentage of AWFPs transporting animals by land was much higher than transport by sea, whatever the species category. Moreover, the percentage of AWFPs transporting animals by land for domestic purposes was found to be much higher than for export purposes, whereas these percentages were similar when considering transport by sea.

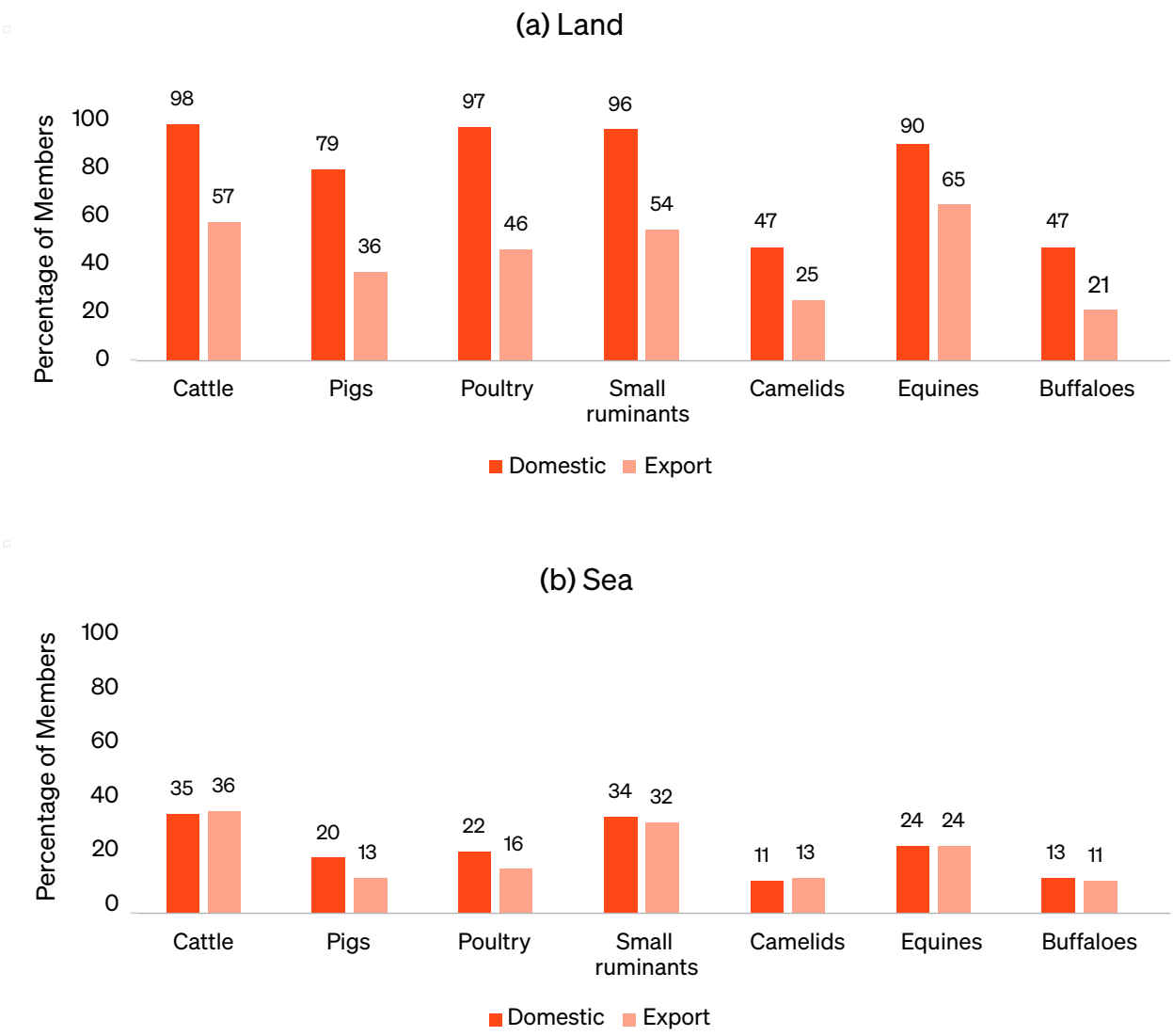


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of AWFPs reporting transport of each of the considered animal species category by land and sea for domestic *versus* export purposes

Percentages were calculated based on the total number of responding AWFPs (*n* = 96).

Table 2 shows the average level of importance of same animal species categories on the scale from (1) the most transported species to (8) the least transported species in terms of numbers of animals transported in 2022, both for domestic and export purposes. The most transported species categories were cattle for transport by land for domestic purposes, as well as for transport by sea for both domestic and export purposes. The least transported species categories were camelids and buffaloes.

Table 2. Average level of importance on a 1-to-8 scale of species categories transported by land and sea for domestic and export purposes

Means were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting transport by land or sea of each of the considered animal species category (land: *n* = 95; sea: *n* = 77).

	Transport by land		Transport by sea	
	Domestic	Export	Domestic	Export
Cattle	2.4	2.6	1.6	2.1
Pigs	2.7	2.9	2.3	3.5
Poultry	2.2	1.9	2.7	2.5
Small ruminants	3.3	3.2	2.6	2.4
Camelids	5.7	4.7	5.5	4.4
Equines	4.4	3.2	4.2	2.7
Buffaloes	5.8	5.8	5.9	5.1

3.1.3 Existence and characteristics of a regulatory framework covering animal welfare during transport by land and sea

In this questionnaire, a regulatory framework meant any regulation, directive, law, decree, code of practice or Standard Operating Procedures that have been adopted at national, sub-national or supra-national level (e.g. regional economic community) and that applies to all of the country or part of it (e.g. part of a federal administrative organisation).

Among the 95 respondents reporting transport by land of any of the considered animal species, 74 (i.e., 78%) reported having a regulatory framework in place covering animal welfare during transport by land (**Figure 2**). Regarding to transport by sea, 54 of the 77 respondents reporting transport by sea of any of the considered animal species (i.e. 70%) reported having a regulatory framework in place covering animal welfare during transport by sea.

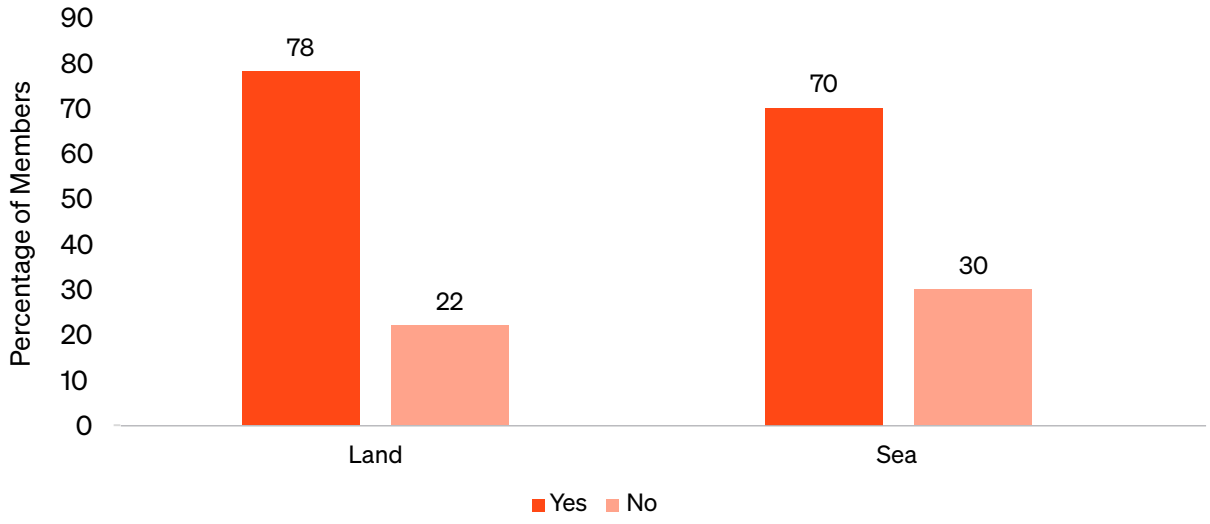


Figure 2. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the presence of a regulatory framework covering animal welfare during transport by land and sea

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting transport by land or sea of any of the considered animal species, per region (land: *n* = 95; sea: *n* = 77).

Detailed results per region are presented in **Figure 3**. In all regions, the percentages of AWFPs having a regulatory framework in place was found consistently higher for transport by land compared to transport by sea. The region with the highest percentage of AWFPs having a regulatory framework was Europe (97% and 80% for transport by land and sea, respectively), whereas the region with the lowest percentage was Africa (48% and 53% for transport by land and sea, respectively).

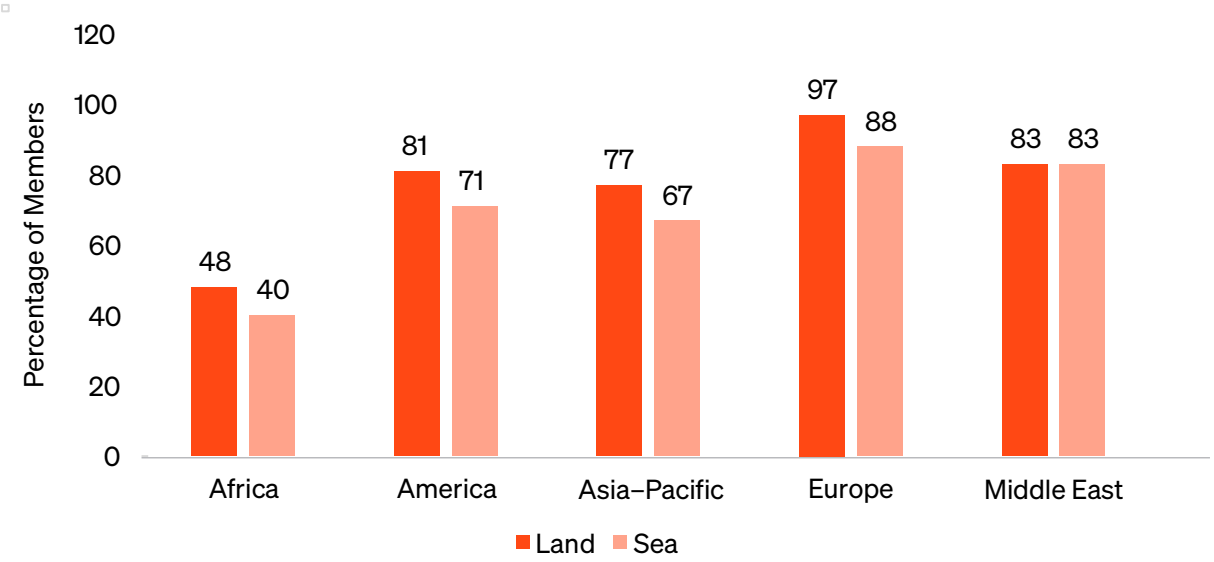


Figure 3. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the presence of a regulatory framework covering animal welfare during transport by land and sea, shown by region

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting transport by land or sea of any of the considered animal species, per region (land: *n* = 95; sea: *n* = 77).

Figure 4 shows the species covered by the regulatory framework developed by those AWFPs. Overall, cattle and small ruminants are the main species included in such frameworks.

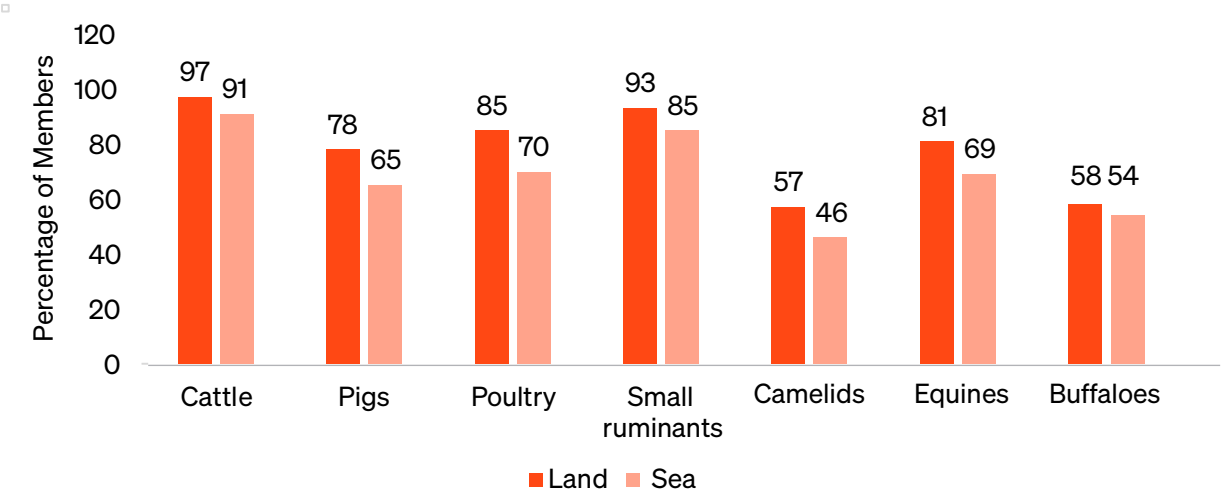


Figure 4. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the species covered by the regulatory framework for animal welfare during transport by land and sea

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting transport by land or sea of any of the considered animal species and reporting having a regulatory framework in place (land: *n* = 74; sea: *n* = 54).

As shown in **Figure 5**, these regulatory frameworks were mainly developed at national level (88% of responding AWFPs with regards to transport by land, 83% for transport by sea). AWFPs reporting supra-nationally developed plans mainly belong to the European and African region.

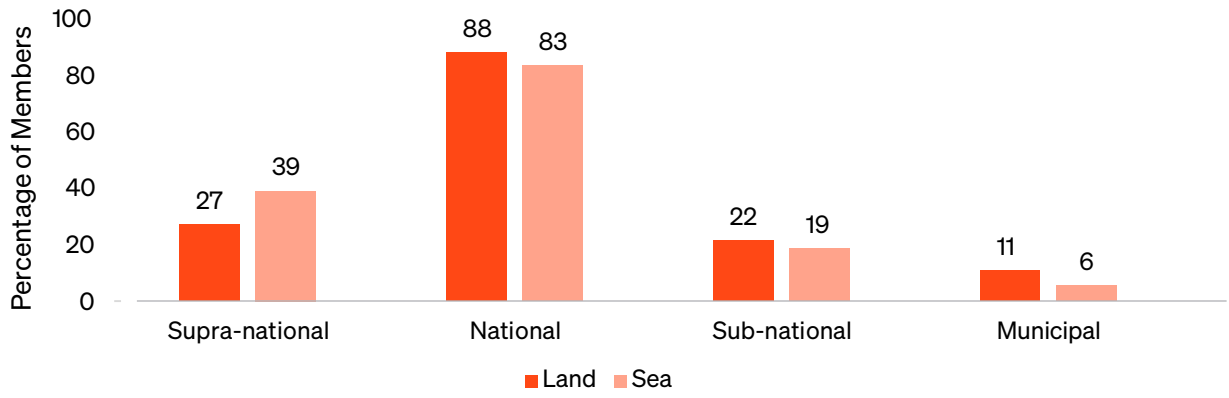


Figure 5. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the administrative level at which the regulatory framework for animal welfare during transport by land and sea has been developed

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting transport by land or sea of any of the considered animal species and reporting having a regulatory framework in place (land: *n* = 74; sea: *n* = 54).

Figure 6 presents whether the regulatory framework in place contains specific approval requirements regarding loading/unloading/holding facilities, vehicles/vessels or containers for transport by land and sea (e.g. licensing, registration or certification). More than 80% of respondents reported having such specific requirements in place for vehicles and vessels, but this percentage was found much lower with regard to facilities and containers (around 60% of responding AWFPs). No major difference was evidenced between transport by land and transport by sea.

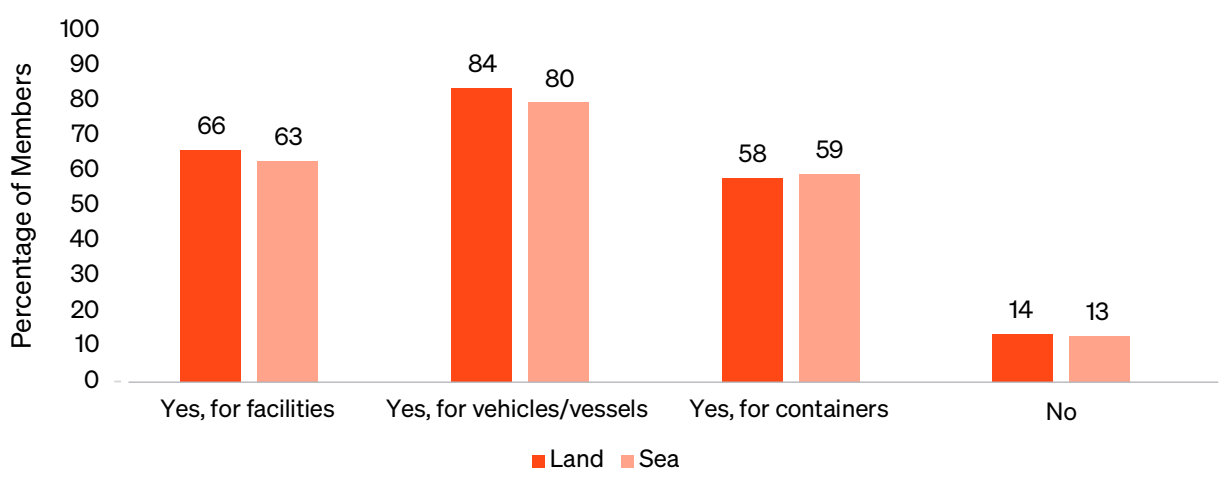


Figure 6. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the presence of specific approval requirements regarding loading/unloading/holding facilities, vehicles/vessels or containers for transport by land and sea

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting transport by land or sea of any of the considered animal species and reporting having a regulatory framework in place (land: *n* = 74; sea: *n* = 54).

As shown in **Figure 7**, the responsibility of actors or entities during transport operations were not always defined in the regulatory framework, with percentages ranging from 49% for managers of facilities at resting points to 86% for animal owners or managers for transport by land). Moreover, even when the responsibilities of actors/entities were reported as being defined, the regulatory framework rarely included specific competency requirements for these actors or entities during transport operations (e.g. competence gained through formal training and/or practical experience), with percentages ranging from 24% for managers of facilities at the end of the journey to 63% for animal handlers for transport by sea.

Among the 74 and 54 AWFPs having a regulatory framework in place for transport by land and sea, respectively, 6 and 3 (i.e. 8% and 6%, respectively) indicated that no journey plan was required (**Figure 8**). For the others, journey duration and space allowance were the requirements that were more frequently reported as having to be part of the journey plan. The less reported requirements were weather forecast (30% and 35% for transport by land and sea, respectively) and kind of road (18% for transport by land).

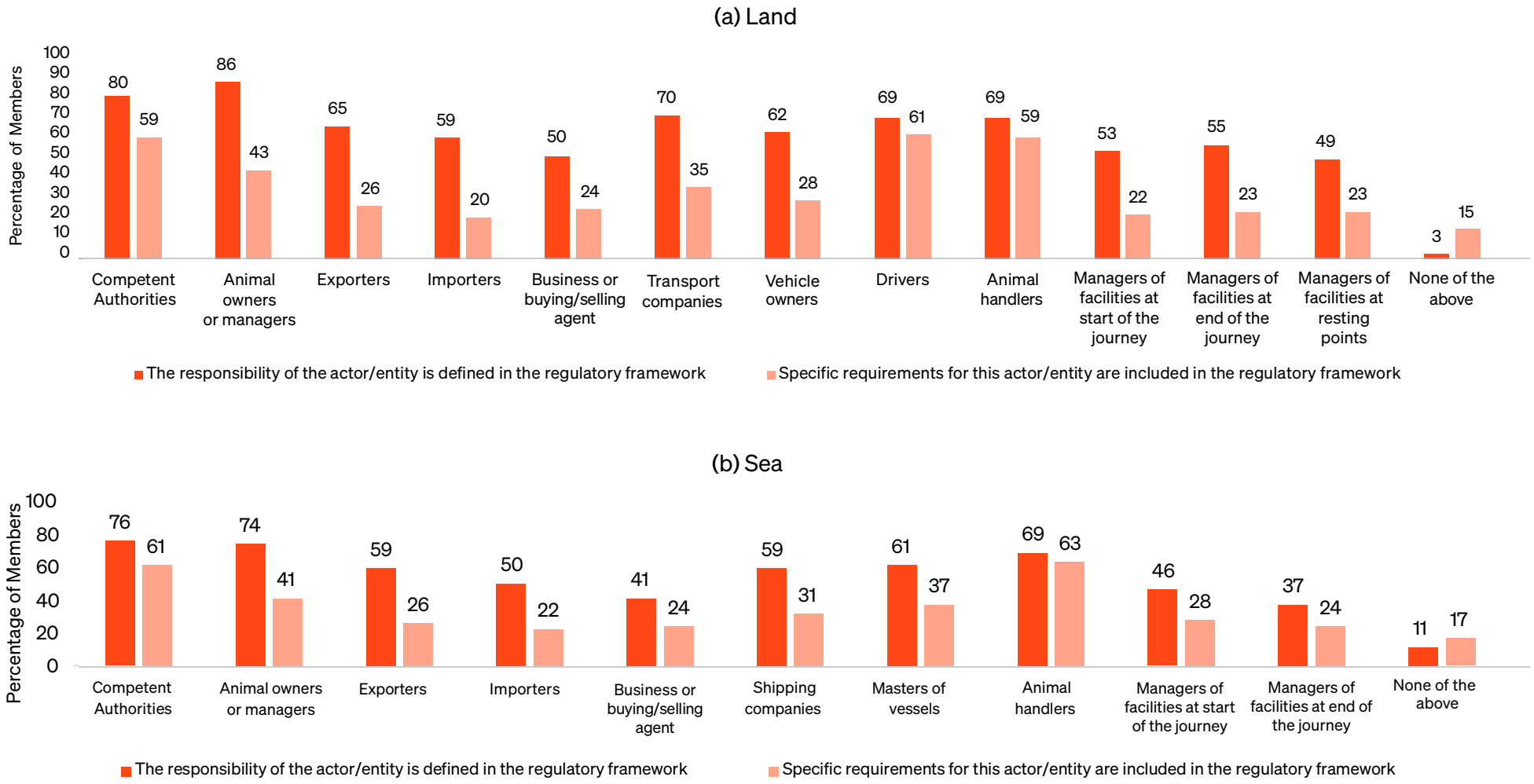


Figure 7. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the responsibility definition and the requirements for actors/entities involved in animal welfare during transport by (a) land and (b) sea

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting transport by land or sea of any of the considered animal species and reporting having a regulatory framework in place (land: *n* = 74; sea: *n* = 54).

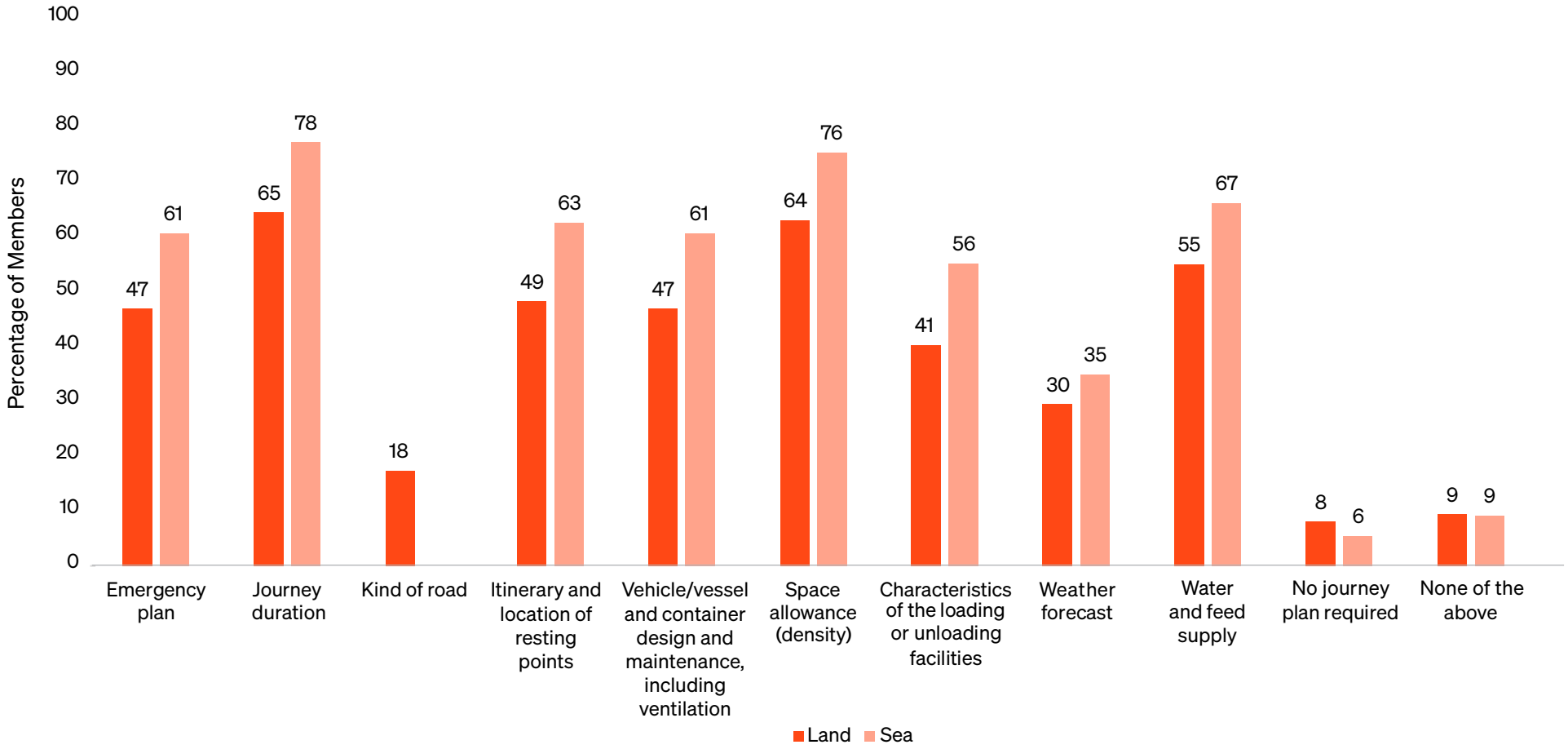


Figure 8. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the existence and the requirements of a journey plan for animal welfare during transport by land and sea

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting transport by land or sea of any of the considered animal species and reporting having a regulatory framework in place (land: *n* = 74; sea: *n* = 54).

Among the 74 AWFPs having a regulatory framework in place related to animal transport by land, 34% reported having a checklist of actions to be followed by actors/entities during transport by land, 46% reported not having such a checklist but planning to develop one, and 20% reported not planning to develop such a checklist. The implementation of a checklist was more often reported when it comes to transport by sea, as the figures were 44%, 33% and 22%, respectively.

Regarding contingency plans, 57% of the AWFPs having a regulatory framework in place related to animal transport by land reported having contingency plans in place, when this figure was equal to 67% when talking about transport by sea.

3.1.4 Existence and characteristics of a mechanism to enforce the regulatory requirements related to animal welfare during transport by land and sea

Among the 74 respondents reporting having a regulatory framework in place covering animal welfare during transport by land, 53 (72%) reported having a mechanism in place to enforce the regulatory requirements related to animal welfare during transport by land. Regarding transport by sea, 40 of the 54 respondents with a regulatory framework for transport by sea (74%) reported having an enforcement mechanism in place covering animal welfare during transport by sea. Detailed results per region are presented in **Figure 9**. In all regions, the percentages of AWFPs having an enforcement mechanism in place was found to be consistently higher for transport by sea compared to transport by land. The region with the highest percentage of AWFPs having an enforcement mechanism was Europe (90% and 81% for transport by land and sea, respectively), whereas the regions with the lowest percentage were Africa with regard to transport by land (50% of AWFPs) and the Middle East with regard to transport by sea (60% of AWFPs).

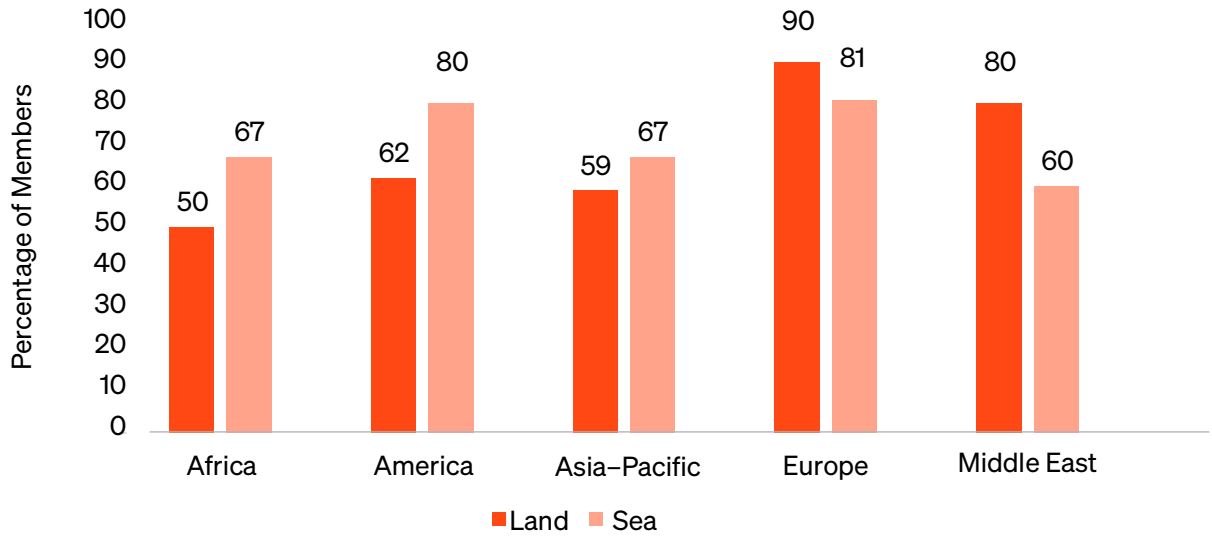


Figure 9. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the presence of a mechanism to enforce regulatory requirements related to animal welfare during transport by land and sea, shown by region

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting having a regulatory framework in place for transport by land and sea, per region (land: *n* = 74; sea: *n* = 54).

As presented in **Figure 10**, these enforcement mechanisms were mainly developed at national level (92% of responding AWFPs with regard to transport by land, 93% for transport by sea).

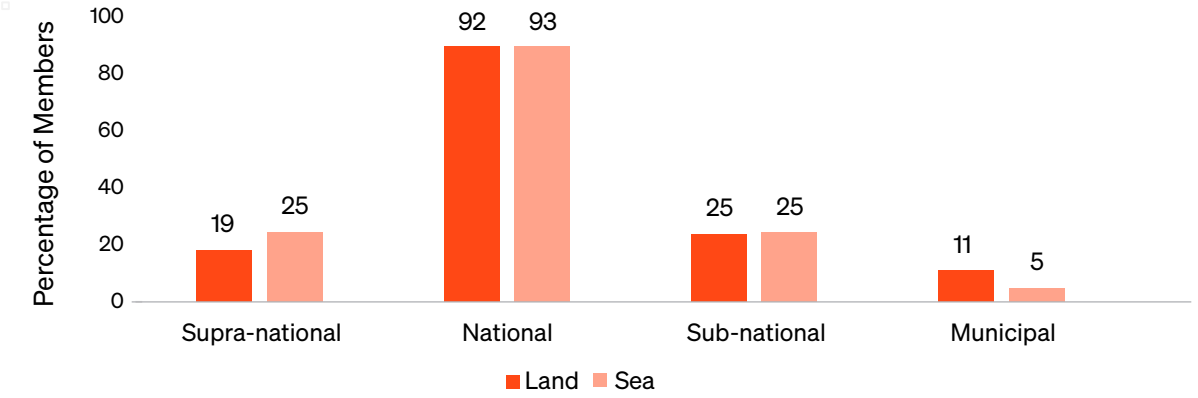


Figure 10. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the administrative level at which the mechanism to enforce regulatory requirements for animal welfare during transport by land and sea has been developed

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting having an enforcement mechanism in place for transport by land and sea, per region (land: *n* = 53; sea: *n* = 40).

The type of inspections conducted for both transport by land and sea were quite similar (**Figure 11**). For transport by land, physical inspections were mainly performed at international border posts (81%) and on arrival (75%), whereas documentary checks happened mainly at international border posts (79%) and before the journey (60%). With regard to transport by sea, physical inspections and documentary checks were mainly conducted at international border posts (78% and 70%, respectively).

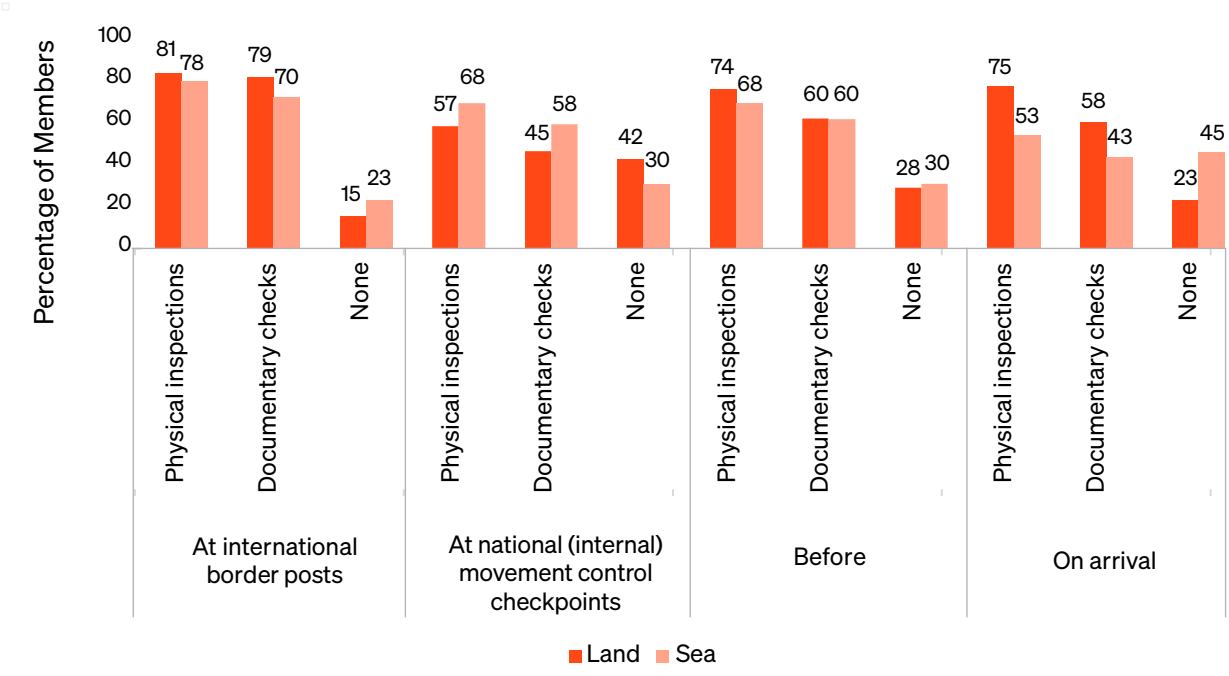
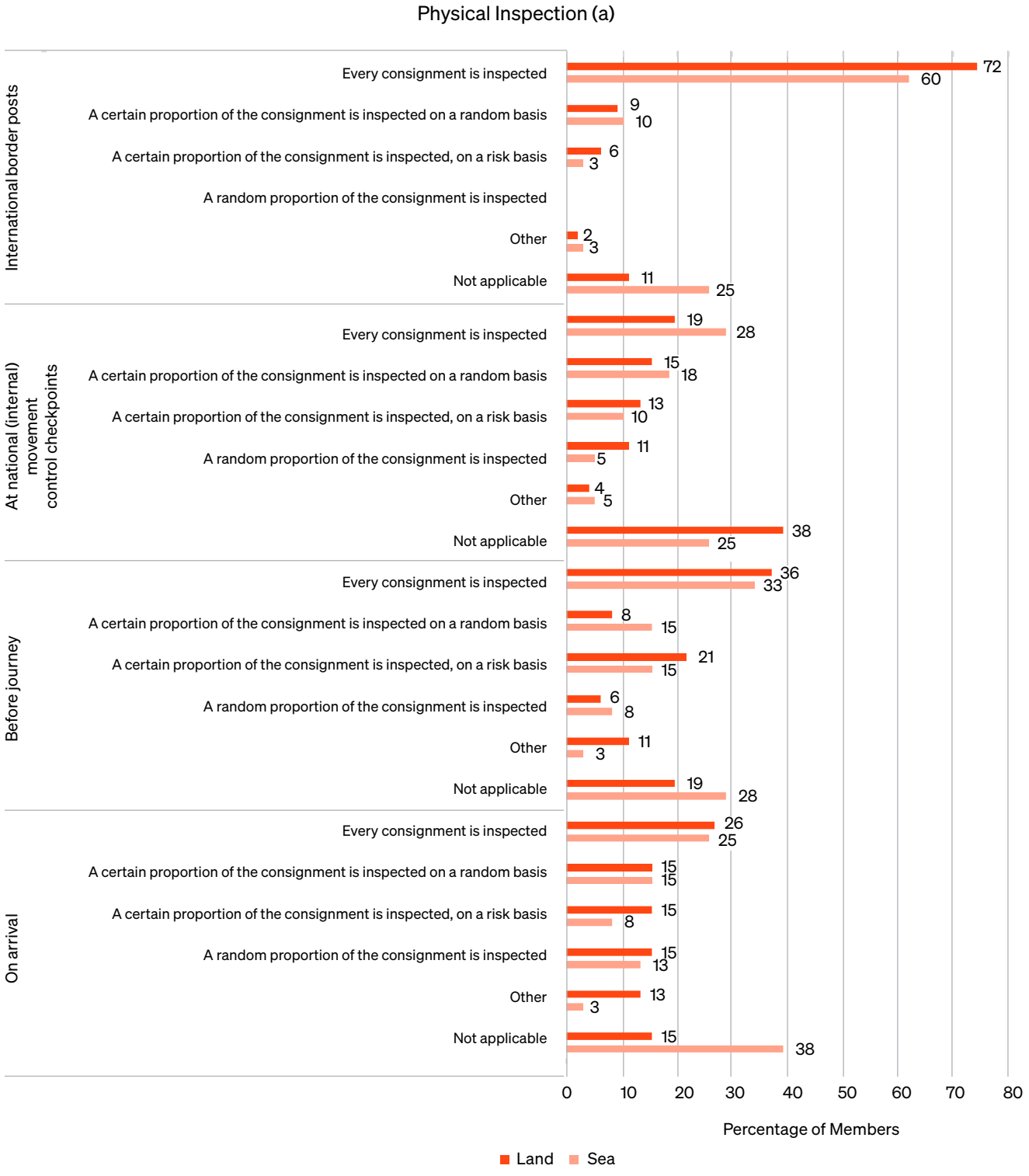


Figure 11. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the type of inspections performed for the control of animal welfare during transport by land and sea

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting having an enforcement mechanism in place for transport by land and sea, per region (land: *n* = 53; sea: *n* = 40).

As presented in **Figure 12**, most inspections, both physical and documentary, were reported to be conducted on a systematic basis, meaning that every consignment is inspected. When not systematic, the frequency of inspection was found to be random, more rarely on a risk basis. Inspections at international borders were more often reported as being conducted on a systematic basis rather than inspection at other check points. No major difference was evidenced between inspections before journey and inspections at arrival.



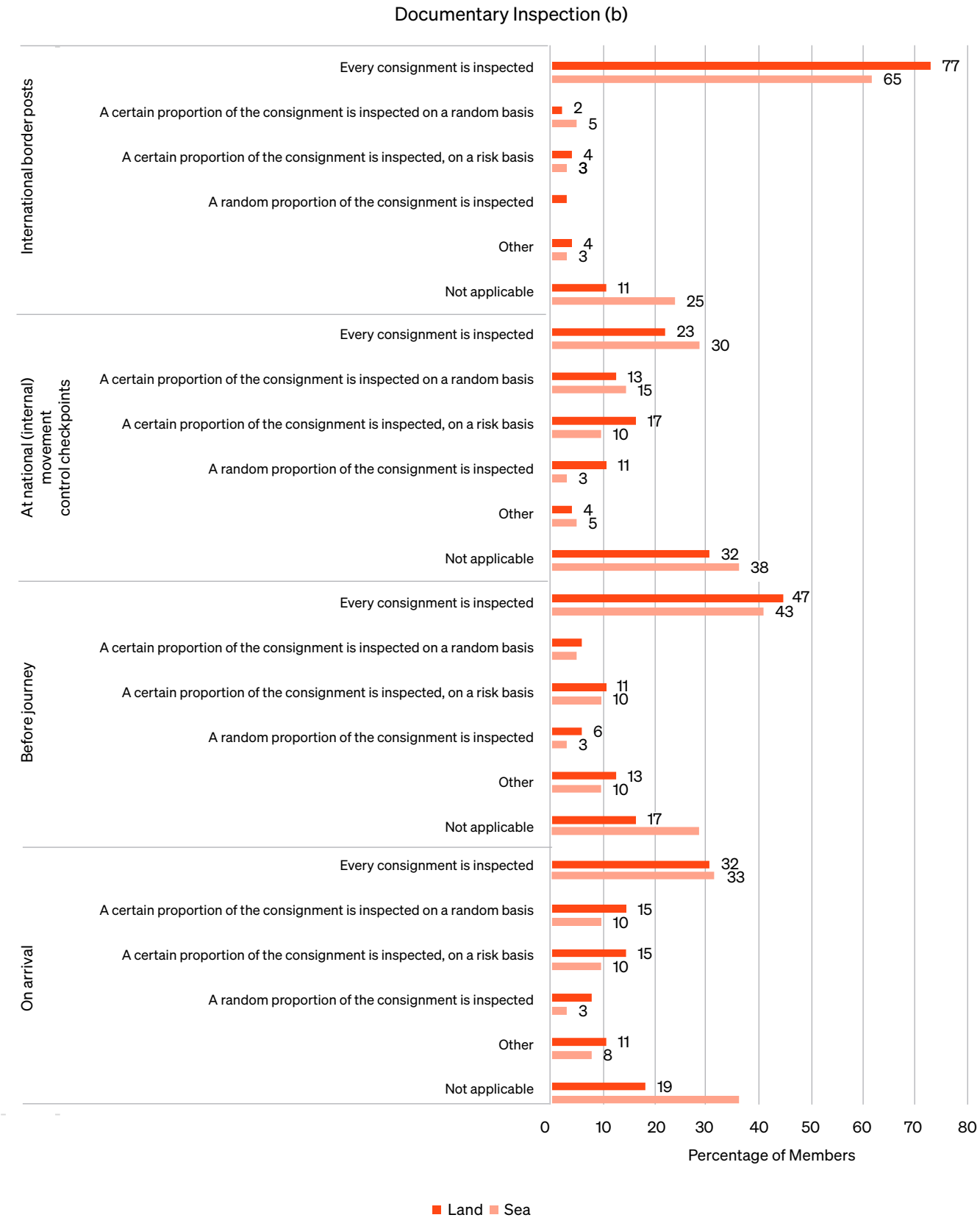


Figure 12. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the frequency of inspections related to animal welfare during transport by land and sea at each inspection point, (a) Physical inspection and (b) Documentary inspection

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting having an enforcement mechanism in place for transport by land and sea, per region (land: *n* = 53; sea: *n* = 40).

3.1.5 More general information

Considering all respondents reporting transport by land of the targeted animal species categories, only 66% reported developing/using non-legislative documents covering animal welfare during transport (**Figure 13**). This figure was slightly lower for transport by sea (43%). The main documents developed/used were non-regulatory recommendations and guidelines (42% and 35% for transport by land and sea, respectively).

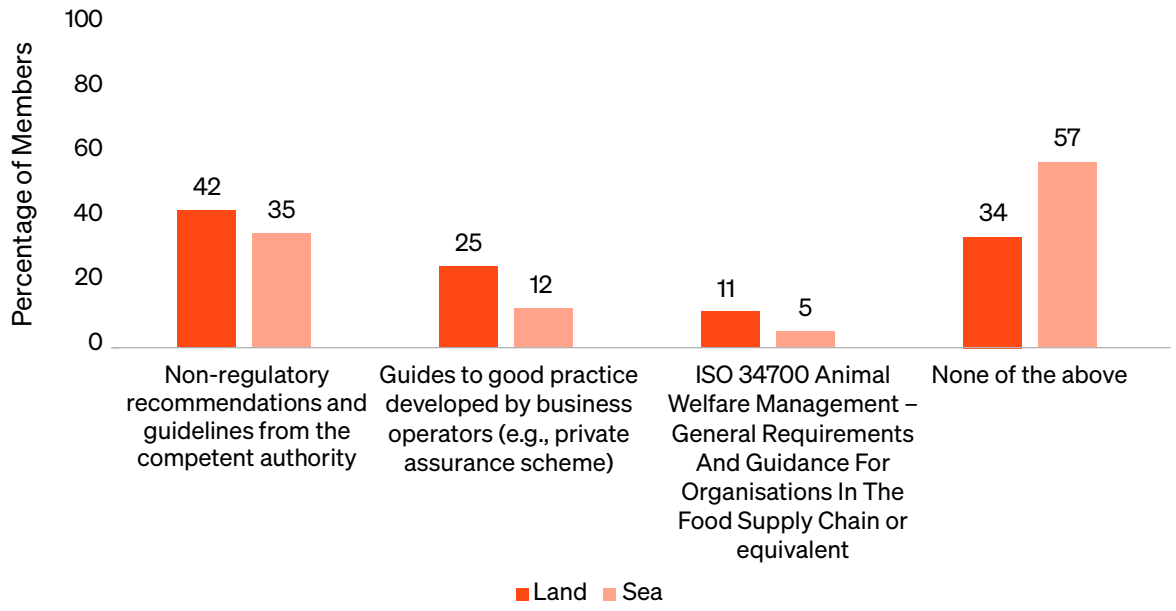


Figure 13. Percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the development/use of non-legislative documents covering animal welfare during transport by land and sea

Percentages were calculated based on the number of AWFPs reporting transport by land or sea of any of the considered animal species, per region (land: *n* = 95; sea: *n* = 77).

Among the 96 respondents, 58 (60%) reported that there was a competent authority other than the Veterinary Authority involved in regulating livestock transport by land or sea in their country. Cited examples included traffic police and road transportation authorities, border customs, labour authorities, foreign affairs and home affairs.

Of the same sample, only 36 AWFPs (38%) indicated that their country was involved in a live animal transport emergency situation in the past ten years. Respondents mainly cited road accidents, flood and natural disasters, heat waves or impossibility to transport animals due to disease outbreak.

Figure 14 presents the percentage distribution of AWFPs depending on the priority level of animal welfare during transport for consumer, business operators and the competent authority. This topic appeared to be a higher priority for the competent authority (60% of answers ranked as high priority, 23% as medium priority), followed by the private sector (30% and 30%, respectively) and consumers (28% and 25%, respectively).

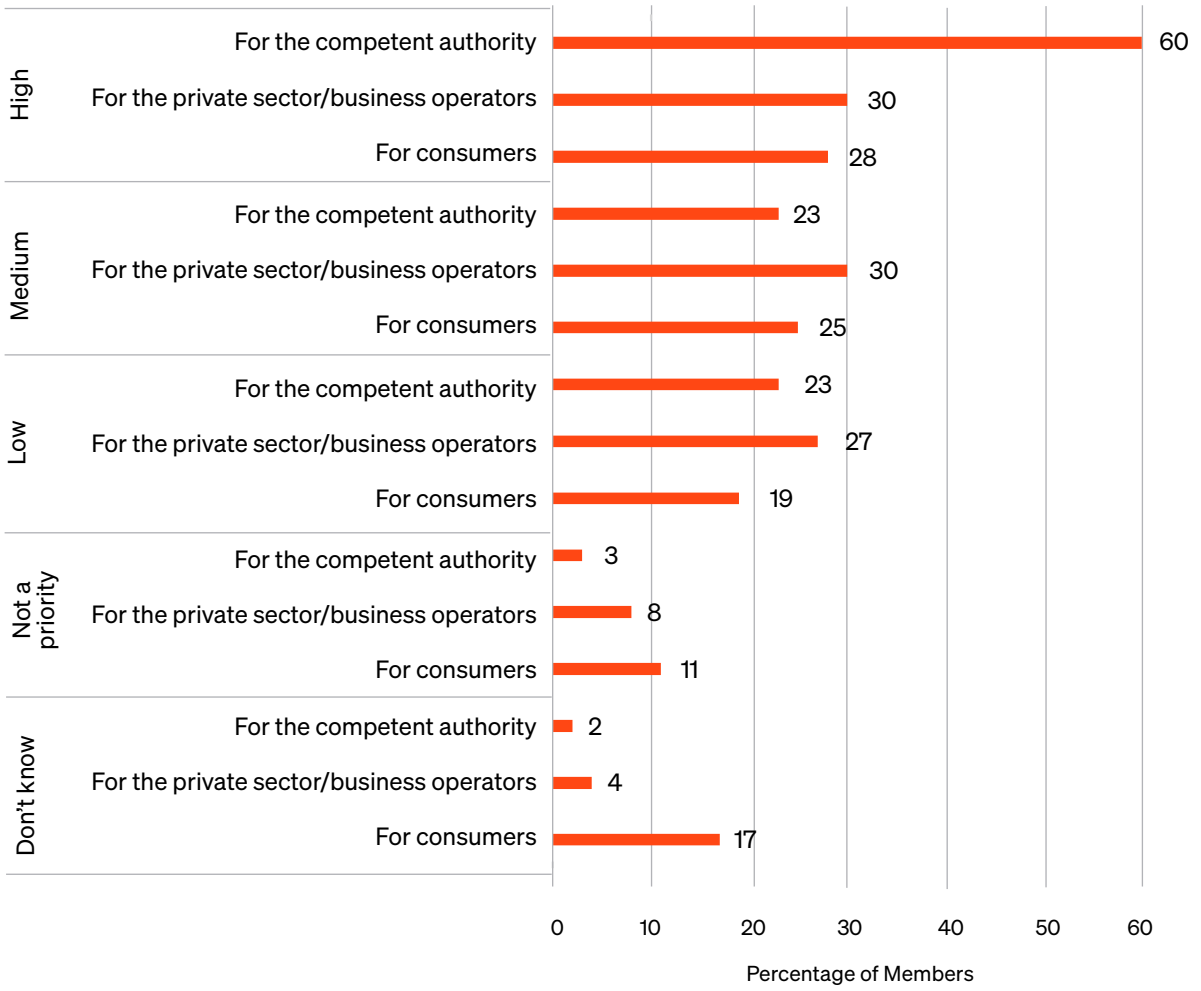


Figure 14. Percentage distribution of Members depending on the priority level of animal welfare during transport for different stakeholders

Percentages were calculated based on the total number of responding AWFPs (*n* = 96).

Finally, 69 out of the 96 respondents (72%) agreed to share their experience on that topic in a one-to-one interview or a focus group.

3.2 Phase 2 Results

3.2.1 Interviews

3.2.1.1 Description of interview participants

Sixteen interviews were conducted between 13 June, 2025, and 28 July, 2025, each lasting approximately between 60 and 90 minutes. Respondents included AWFPs from Africa (*n* = 2), the Americas (*n* = 5), Asia–Pacific (*n* = 3), Europe (*n* = 3) and the Middle East (*n* = 3).

3.2.1.2 Context and scope

While every effort was made to accurately capture and represent perspectives from all participating AWFPs, the level of depth and contextual understanding in the findings

varies. In some cases, interviews were conducted in English with participants for whom it was not a first language, which may have influenced how ideas were expressed or interpreted. Additionally, the research team has more familiarity with livestock transport systems in Canada, the United States, Australia and the European Union compared to other regions. These factors may have shaped the insights and interpretation presented. Any gaps or inconsistencies should be viewed as a reflection of these methodological limitations rather than of the participating AWFPs or their representatives.

Because the interviews varied considerably in depth, this synthesis focuses on broad themes rather than country-specific analysis. Nonetheless, the findings provide valuable insight into the global integration of WOAH standards and the factors influencing their successful implementation.

3.2.1.3 Themes from interviews

3.2.1.3.1 Level of integration and enforcement

Across the 16 interviews conducted, there was widespread acknowledgement of the value and importance of WOAH's animal welfare in transport standards. Most AWFPs reported some degree of integration into their national frameworks, but the depth and form of that integration differed considerably.

Jurisdictions with mature and well-established regulatory systems often use the WOAH standards as a guiding reference rather than a prescriptive rule set. Their alignment depends on how well the standards fit existing legislation, review cycles and policy priorities. Conversely, nations with less developed frameworks tend to adopt WOAH standards more directly as a foundational resource. However, this approach can create challenges in implementation, as the standards are intentionally broad and may lack the operational detail needed for enforcement in resource-limited settings.

In most cases, WOAH standards are not explicitly enforced unless they have been incorporated into national law. Even then, enforcement presents challenges due to geography, infrastructure, capacity and resources. When regulations are enforced at the national level, it is assumed that WOAH alignment is achieved by proxy. This creates variability in how consistently the standards are applied and interpreted globally. Even within regions such as the European Union, differences in interpretation and enforcement between member states can create practical problems, particularly for import and export of live animals across borders.

Several AWFPs noted ongoing legislative reform aimed at addressing animal welfare and transport gaps, though these efforts are at different stages of development. In most cases, animal welfare legislation is a collaborative process involving veterinarians, regulators and other stakeholders, but the degree of emphasis placed specifically on animal transport varies.

3.2.1.3.2 Barriers to implementation

Multiple structural, logistical and contextual barriers hinder consistent implementation of WOAH transport standards. The most common challenge cited by interviewees was

limited capacity for training, enforcement and awareness-raising. In many contexts, animal transport continues to be viewed as a logistical or economic activity rather than one with significant welfare implications. Transporters, farmers and border agents may lack exposure to welfare principles or the knowledge needed to apply them effectively in day-to-day operations. These challenges are further compounded by limited financial and institutional resources. Several AWFPs stressed that these gaps are often the result of a more fundamental issue: animal welfare in transport is not considered a strategic priority by senior leadership. When higher-level ministries and decision makers see transport primarily as a trade or economic issue, investment in welfare-related enforcement, infrastructure or capacity building is minimal. Interviewees noted that without political commitment at a country or territory or regional level, officials responsible for implementation lack the mandate, support and budget to act, meaning even well-designed regulations remain under-resourced, inconsistently applied or unenforced in practice.

In a few cases, participants reported that animal welfare receives public or political attention only after high-profile incidents, or when required to maintain access to export markets, rather than as part of proactive governance. As a result, frontline personnel (i.e. inspectors, veterinarians, transport officers and port officials) often operate without the training, authority or tools they need. This lack of prioritisation was repeatedly identified as a root cause; if leadership does not view welfare during transport as an issue worth investing in, those working on the ground cannot be supported to implement the standards effectively.

Infrastructure limitations also emerged as a critical barrier. In several AWFPs, specialised vehicles, suitable vessels and adequate port facilities are lacking, or available only in certain major regions. Damaged or outdated infrastructure can make compliance with welfare standards impractical, even where the intent exists.

Several interviewees emphasised the need for more specific and actionable guidance within the WOAH standards themselves. AWFPs requested clearer parameters related to temperature control, journey duration, stocking density and emergency response. In the absence of these details, officials and transporters are often left to interpret broad welfare standards independently, which can lead to inconsistent implementation and, at times, tension between trading partners. Interviewees also highlighted the value of plain-language summaries of the scientific rationale behind each WOAH standard. Such summaries could help non-specialist audiences understand the importance of each standard and the evidence supporting its welfare benefits, making it easier to communicate and justify compliance.

Language barriers further complicate the process. Some AWFPs reported limited access to translations of WOAH standards and supporting technical resources, making it difficult to integrate the guidance into national frameworks. Low political prioritisation of animal welfare or live animal transport was also cited as a barrier, with other policy areas often taking precedence.

A recurring underlying theme was the tension between welfare objectives and economic cost. In contexts where enforcement could delay trade or raise operational expenses, welfare standards were sometimes reported to be deprioritised or applied flexibly.

3.2.1.3.3 Challenges in sea transport

Sea transport emerged as a distinct area of concern across multiple interviews. Several AWFPs reported intense public and media scrutiny surrounding live animal exports by sea, particularly during high-profile incidents of compromised welfare. Once animals are at sea, national Veterinary Authorities have limited oversight; control typically rests with ship captains and under maritime law. This creates jurisdictional gaps that make it difficult to monitor or enforce welfare standards. Extended voyage durations, unpredictable weather, conditions of the vessels and limited emergency response options further heighten welfare risks.

Interviewees highlighted the potential for emergencies arising from delays, equipment failures, or port refusals, which could impact thousands of animals. In addition, if a major problem was to occur, animals cannot be returned to their country of origin, compounding the challenge.

Some AWFPs described a desire for better coordination between exporting and importing countries, particularly regarding paperwork and communication. Exporting nations often do not receive timely or detailed information about the condition of animals upon arrival, limiting their ability to evaluate welfare outcomes or take corrective action.

For many AWFPs, addressing sea transport is politically sensitive. Some face strong advocacy campaigns calling for bans on live exports, while others depend economically on this trade. As such, welfare standards for sea transport represent both a technical and a political challenge, requiring careful balance between welfare, trade and public perception.

3.2.1.3.4 Success factors and opportunities for alignment

Despite these challenges, there are encouraging examples of progress and successful alignment. Some interviewees described WOAH's outcome-based standards as valuable in maintaining welfare principles without imposing rigid requirements that may not fit all local contexts. This flexibility allows AWFPs to tailor implementation while preserving core welfare objectives.

Countries that demonstrated higher levels of alignment tended to share several features: strong inter-agency collaboration, clear legal frameworks and mechanisms to update local legislation in response to evolving WOAH guidance. Regular review and alignment processes, whether formalised or *ad hoc*, were cited as key enablers of progress.

In some cases, international trade requirements served as an external motivator for welfare improvement, as trade partners increasingly demand assurances of humane transport practices. This dynamic has encouraged some exporting countries to upgrade legislation, documentation systems and inspection procedures to maintain market access.

However, some AWFPs noted a lack of sufficient capacity to sustain such initiatives. The shortage of veterinarians, trained inspectors and animal welfare specialists limits how effectively policies can be developed and implemented. Several interviewees emphasised the need for technical and peer support during the drafting or revision of local legislation, including access to international experts for benchmarking and review.

3.2.1.3.5 The need for clarity, collaboration and communication

A dominant cross-cutting theme across all interviews was the need for greater clarity, collaboration and communication, both from WOAH and among AWFPs. Participants expressed a strong interest in practical tools that translate WOAH standards into clear operational guidance, including templates, checklists and case studies tailored to local realities.

Training was identified as a critical gap. Respondents called for structured, multi-level capacity building, particularly for veterinarians, inspectors and border officials, alongside awareness-raising initiatives for livestock industries. A 'train-the-trainer' model was brought forward as a scalable way to build local expertise.

Many AWFPs also emphasised the value of peer learning and regional exchange. While the WOAH Focal Point system provides an important communication channel, many respondents suggested expanding collaboration platforms to enable more regular exchange between AWFPs with similar trade routes, challenges or resource levels. Improved communication between exporting and importing nations was viewed as essential to avoid misunderstandings, harmonise expectations and prevent welfare risks during cross-border movements.

Finally, several participants acknowledged the essential role WOAH plays as a global connector, linking Members, delegates and focal points. Strengthening this function and supporting AWFPs in accessing technical guidance, infrastructure investment and expert review would further advance the consistent implementation of animal transport standards worldwide.

3.2.2 Focus groups

3.2.2.1 Description of focus group participants

Two focus groups were held with the aims to confirm Member agreement with the interview themes described above, and to explore practical, regionally relevant solutions for integrating WOAH standards for the transport of livestock by land and sea. Groups were held on 30 September, 2025, and 1 October, 2025, each lasting approximately 90 minutes.

3.2.2.2 Themes from focus groups

Overall, participating AWFPs confirmed their agreement with the themes developed from the individual interviews. Below, we present four primary themes summarising the conversations from the focus groups, involving: 1) the experienced challenges relative to what WOAH transport guidelines set out to achieve, involving uneven adoption of WOAH standards, training and enforcement gaps, deficient transport infrastructure, ambiguous responsibilities and economic and political constraints, 2) shared solutions to improve training to build capacity and increase communication and collaboration amongst key stakeholders, 3) goals for closer alignment with WOAH standards in the coming years, and 4) what WOAH can do to support AWFPs in achieving these goals moving forward.

3.2.2.2.1 Shared challenges

AWFPs reiterated that they continue to face several challenges relative to alignment with WOAH transport standards. Among these, interpretation, adoption and enforcement of WOAH's standards remains variable. This inconsistency results from differing regulatory expectations and norms within AWFPs as well as variable capacity to embed standards within existing legal guidance. This problem is compounded by the deficiencies in awareness, education and training for animal welfare before, during and after transport, highlighted as a major concern by most participants. This problem was reported for actors throughout the transportation chain, including farmers, drivers, handlers, vessel crews and enforcement entities. In many situations, this is exacerbated further by limited or non-existent systems for licensing or certification to ensure competence for proper animal handling and transport. Further, deficient infrastructure – where vehicle condition is poor or not well maintained, rest or stopover facilities are either limited or not available, and inspection capacity is limited – pose further barriers to successful and humane transport. AWFPs also often face the situation where the roles and responsibilities between exporters, importers and enforcement entities are not clearly delineated or defined, leading to low accountability and clarity of expectations for responsibility of care. Finally, participants highlighted that the 'temperature' of their AWFPs' economic or political situations often meant that animal welfare was deprioritised relative to other, more urgent national concerns, resulting in limited political will or resources to address these challenges.

3.2.2.2.2 Desired solutions

To address the challenges above, participants called for two core areas to be better addressed: one involving improved training to build capacity throughout the transportation chain, and the other related to increasing communication and collaboration, both between Members and WOAH as well as within country. First, AWFPs consistently voiced the need for harmonised, competency-based training across the entire transport chain, including farmers, handlers, drivers, veterinarians, inspectors and others involved with regulatory oversight. Some suggested a 'train-the-trainer' approach, to enable training efforts to better reach those in remote regions. Participants were also interested in what it might take to establish regional or more global training platforms, with some suggestions to model these on the EU's Animal Welfare Reference Centres. AWFPs were explicit about what effective training should look like: training modules should be short, accessible and adapted to different educational levels. Suggestions included to prioritise in-person training where possible, and to otherwise make use of videos, infographics, checklists, species-specific technical guides and step-by-step guides. Ensuring that training resources were based in plain-language, supporting translation into local languages, was also considered critical. Finally, participants expressed that training materials and resources must be grounded in practical, evidence-based science that more explicitly referenced parameters like journey times, space allowances and temperature limits.

Second, participants emphasised the need for improving communication and collaboration amongst livestock welfare transportation stakeholders, at the international, national and regional level. Collaboration at the international level (i.e. among national focal points and between focal points and WOAH) could be facilitated with the creation of a centralised platform or portal to enable key individuals to readily connect with each other to exchange and build knowledge and capacity. Within country, AWFPs also expressed a desire for better coordination between ministries (e.g. amongst agriculture, maritime and law enforcement entities) to enable more consistent, transparent governance of livestock transport. Suggested mechanisms to enable increased communication and collaboration amongst these bodies include peer-to-peer learning and exchange networks, which were hoped to enable better provision of mutual support and knowledge exchange, thus providing a foundation for greater application of standards across regions.

3.2.2.2.3 Goals in the coming years

Participants expressed several goals for what they hoped their AWFPs might accomplish in the next two to three years to improve the welfare of livestock during transport by land and sea. Among these was the development (for some AWFPs) and better enforcement (for most) of national legislation aligned with WOAH's transport standards. For AWFPs who report that they already have strong frameworks in place, they reiterate that WOAH's standards remain relevant in helping to reinforce minimal standards. Building from their desired solutions to improve welfare training, development of improved education initiatives targeted to farmers, transporters and enforcement agencies was highlighted as a priority. To address the challenges reported related to infrastructure, participants likewise identified how investment in better transportation infrastructure was a priority, to enable safer, more welfare-friendly livestock transportation. Finally, discussions highlighted a shared desire to initiate or expand upon existing regional cooperation networks to enable continuous improvement and harmonisation of transport expectations across regions.

3.2.2.2.4 How WOAH can support progress towards these goals

To better achieve these targets, participants expressed several desires for where and how WOAH could better support progress of AWFPs moving forward. They requested WOAH to take a lead role in hosting or supporting the creation of a centralised platform to enable focal points and other key individuals to network and information-share, to facilitate regular communication and exchange of success stories in implementation and enforcement of WOAH standards. They also called for WOAH to take an active role in developing and translating the training materials described as part of Members' desired solutions. Finally, AWFPs emphasised their continued appreciation for WOAH's existing support in helping AWFPs to build capacity at the country and regional level and expressed the hope that WOAH could continue to support legislative and capacity development in the form of financial support and technical expertise, where applicable, to help AWFPs achieve continued progress in strengthening animal welfare outcomes during transportation.

3.2.3 Challenges and limitations

This project revealed several challenges in conducting international interviews across diverse contexts. We experienced issues with emails not reaching the correct Delegate or Focal Point, sometimes resulting in a failure-to-deliver notification. In other cases, emails were delivered but we did not receive a response. The process was slowed when AWFPs needed to identify the appropriate interviewee, if it was not the AWFP. Scheduling was further complicated by differences in how time zones are referenced and observed. Updating email lists for accuracy and exploring alternative ways to communicate with AWFPs could help address these challenges moving forward.

Language barriers sometimes limited participants' ability to fully express their perspectives, underscoring the potential value of offering more meaningful and broad translation services in future work. Cultural differences in communication styles and business practices also surfaced throughout the process. This may have impacted the level of transparency participants could offer, how questions were interpreted, or aspects they chose to focus on during the interview. For example, hesitancy to speak openly about sensitive issues like government policies or a focus on the country's own legislative process.

We understand everyone involved in this work is managing significant demands, and we remain grateful and respectful of their time and willingness to participate. We appreciate the participants' openness and honesty. It was a pleasure to connect with so many individuals across the globe who are passionate about animal welfare. Many of them overcome significant obstacles to do their important work, sometimes in contexts where it is not a high priority.

Ultimately, we can only share what we heard, knowing this represents only part of the story. Some perspectives and experiences may not have been captured because participants could not be reached, were unable to take part for various reasons, or faced language barriers or cultural constraints. These reflections underscore the importance of accommodating participants' requests and refining our approach to better align with local practices in future collaborations.

4. Conclusions

This study provides a global snapshot of how WOAH AWFPs are implementing animal welfare standards for the transport of terrestrial animals by land and sea, combining quantitative survey findings with qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups. Together, the results show that while most AWFPs have taken steps to address animal welfare in transport, implementation remains uneven and is constrained by practical, regulatory and resource-related challenges.

Phase 1 demonstrated that a majority of surveyed AWFPs report having regulatory frameworks for transport by land (78%) and sea (70%), and most of those frameworks include mechanisms for enforcement. However, the extent to which these frameworks align with WOAH standards varies widely. Core elements such as defined responsibilities for actors in the transport chain, approval requirements for facilities and vehicles, checklists, contingency plans and journey documentation are not consistently included. The presence of regulatory tools does not always guarantee operational implementation, and notable regional differences persist.

Phase 2 provided insight into why these gaps exist. AWFPs widely value WOAH standards and view them as an important reference, but implementation is shaped by political prioritisation, resource availability, infrastructure and national capacity. In many contexts, animal transport is approached primarily as a logistical or economic activity, which limits investment in training, enforcement and awareness-raising. Officials, inspectors and transport operators often lack exposure to animal welfare principles, and where standards are not supported by legal mandates, consistent enforcement is difficult.

Sea transport emerged as a distinct and complex area of concern. Once animals are at sea, oversight shifts to maritime authority rather than Veterinary Authority, and AWFPs described jurisdictional gaps, limited emergency response options and high reputational risk when welfare failures occur. As a result, even AWFPs with strong land-transport systems reported difficulty ensuring consistent welfare outcomes at sea.

Despite these challenges, the study identified shared drivers of progress. AWFPs with clear, well-coordinated legal frameworks and strong interagency collaboration reported more consistent alignment with WOAH standards. International trade requirements and market expectations can incentivise improvements in welfare practices and documentation. Across regions, AWFPs expressed strong interest in maintaining dialogue with WOAH and one another, and many highlighted the value of peer exchange and access to practical tools that translate outcome-based standards into operational guidance.

Overall, the findings indicate that WOAH standards are globally recognised and widely referenced, but implementation remains variable and depends heavily on national context. Most AWFPs have foundational regulatory structures in place, yet practical adoption is often limited by political will, institutional capacity, infrastructure and technical clarity. Continued focus on training, communication and cross-country coordination will be important to support consistent welfare outcomes for animals transported by land and sea.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered as suggestions to support continued progress in aligning local systems with WOAH standards. They reflect the findings of both study phases and are framed as opportunities for improvement rather than prescriptive requirements.

5.1 Opportunities for WOAH Support

5.1.1 Strengthened strategic guidance

The findings of this thematic study directly support the ongoing revision of the *Terrestrial Code* Chapters 7.2 and 7.3 on animal welfare during transport by sea and land. WOAH should continue to engage with and share these findings with the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission and Members throughout the revision process, working towards standards that are more readily implementable by Members. The WOAH Global Animal Welfare Strategy (GAWS) aims to support the development and effective implementation of international animal welfare standards around the world. Regional animal welfare strategies help facilitate the GAWS within the specific context of their regions. The findings from the thematic study will assist in aligning the revisions of both global and

regional animal welfare strategies. This alignment will provide better support for WOAH AWFPs, ensuring a coherent approach that connects standard development with practical implementation. The goal is to provide tailored support that meets the specific AWFPs' needs and priorities.

Additionally, WOAH should continue its engagement in supporting the development of regional animal welfare strategies, including participation in the governance structures of bodies involved in shaping these strategies. This ongoing involvement would complement efforts to facilitate dialogue among AWFPs and strengthen coordination across regions.

5.1.2 Enhanced technical guidance, practical tools and train-the-trainer resources

At the global level, there is considerable opportunity for WOAH to expand the technical support available to AWFPs. Many AWFPs expressed a need for clearer operational guidance that helps translate standard requirements into day-to-day practice. Practical tools such as model regulations, contingency plan templates, checklists, vessel and vehicle guidance, and example journey documentation could help AWFPs adapt the standards to local regulatory and infrastructure realities.

In parallel, there is scope to complement operational guidance with education and continuing education approaches that also target leadership and decision-making levels, ensuring that animal welfare during transport is understood not only as a technical issue but as a strategic responsibility. Complementing these tools, WOAH may wish to develop train-the-trainer resources so that AWFPs can build internal capacity rather than rely solely on external training opportunities. These resources could be supported by macro-learning materials, such as short videos, case studies and examples of good practices, to facilitate rapid knowledge transfer and wider reach. Several AWFPs noted that structured training programmes, combined with locally delivered training through Veterinary Services, inspectorates, or transport associations, would be one of the most effective ways to expand awareness and operational competence over time.

5.1.3 Facilitation of peer learning, communication and regional alignment

There is also an opportunity for WOAH to continue facilitating dialogue among AWFPs, particularly those that share transport pathways or similar infrastructure limitations. Some AWFPs saw value in learning from peers facing comparable conditions and constraints, especially regarding enforcement models, approval processes and risk-based approaches to inspection. Continued regional or thematic exchanges may help promote more consistent expectations along shared trade routes and reduce confusion among transporters and officials who move animals across multiple jurisdictions.

In this context, the WOAH regional network of National Contact Points on long-distance transport in Europe is an example of a well-established mechanism to improve communication and coordination to address animal welfare issues arising during transport. By sharing experiences and best practices, it enhances collaboration and supports the effective implementation of animal welfare standards across the region.

In addition, existing networks, including the Animal Welfare Collaborating Centres and its educational resources, could be further leveraged and scaled up to support peer learning and the dissemination of practical experience.

5.1.4 Stronger advocacy and cross-sector engagement

Many interview participants noted that animal transport is often still viewed primarily in logistical or economic terms. WOAH is well-placed to take a stronger advocacy role in demonstrating why welfare during transport matters for animal health, trade reputation and public confidence. By elevating the scientific basis and practical importance of transport welfare, WOAH may help local leadership recognise transport as a strategic priority. Leadership-focused continuing education initiatives may further support this shift by strengthening ownership and accountability at senior policy and management levels. This type of advocacy can support regulators who are already motivated to improve implementation but lack a clear mandate or resources. For maritime transport, continued engagement with international maritime bodies could help address structural gaps in oversight once animals are at sea and encourage greater harmonisation of expectations across sectors.

In addition, reproducing the 'whole journey scenario' workshop in WOAH regions that have not yet benefited from this training could help AWFPs improve animal welfare during long-distance and cross-border transport in line with WOAH standards by land and sea. These workshops bring together all stakeholders involved in live animal transport – from departure to destination – to ensure a harmonised understanding and implementation of WOAH standards on animal welfare.

5.2 Opportunities for Members

5.2.1 Strengthening institutional and regulatory foundations

At the national level, many Members already have foundational regulatory frameworks in place but reported difficulty translating those frameworks into consistent practice. Members may find it useful to consider whether animal transport receives sufficient recognition within broader welfare or livestock strategies, and whether responsible authorities have the legal mandate, staffing and resources needed to act. Several interviewees observed that even when standards exist, inconsistent application can arise where transport responsibilities fall across multiple ministries or are overshadowed by other priorities.

5.2.2 Capacity building, education and operational competence

Members may wish to focus on capacity building and awareness as a means of improving implementation. Education on transport welfare can be integrated into veterinary and animal science education, aligned with the revised WOAH Day 1 competencies, to ensure early and consistent exposure to animal welfare principles across the veterinary workforce. In parallel, continuing education and professional development activities may be aligned with the Competency Package on Animal Welfare Terms of Reference, including for transporter licensing or certification processes and for enforcement officers, border agents and maritime personnel.

Members may also wish to draw on the WOAH Veterinary Legislation Support Programme to analyse national veterinary legislation, identify gaps and weaknesses, and strengthen legal frameworks relating to animal health and welfare.

For many Members, the challenge is not disagreement with the standards, but limited exposure to welfare principles and a lack of clarity on responsibilities among public and private stakeholders, including civil society organisations. Engagement with private and non-state organisations through Public–Private Partnership Targeted Support under the Performance of Veterinary Services Pathway may further help strengthen operational capacity and enhance animal health and welfare outcomes.

National education campaigns or targeted professional training may help shift the perception of transport from a purely logistical activity to a recognised welfare concern.

5.2.3 Participation in WOAH processes

There is also an opportunity for Members to engage more actively in WOAH processes, including standard-setting, expert working groups, consultation rounds and capacity development initiatives. Participation enables Members to raise practical concerns, clarify expectations, strengthen veterinary legislation related to welfare and shape technical guidance in ways that reflect their realities. Interview participants noted that some implementation challenges, such as limited infrastructure or jurisdictional ambiguity at sea, can be more effectively addressed when Members communicate their needs through WOAH's consultative channels. Increased engagement may also help ensure that future tools and capacity-building efforts meet Members' needs.

5.2.4 Interagency collaboration for sea transport

For maritime transport, closer coordination between Veterinary Authorities and maritime regulators may improve oversight and clarify responsibilities. Members with active export pathways frequently described gaps in emergency preparedness, vessel approval and inspection authority once animals leave port. WOAH Members may also consider advocating within the relevant maritime international organisations for the development of dedicated standards for livestock vessels, to strengthen consistency in safety and welfare requirements

Establishing shared protocols, joint inspection systems, or memoranda of understanding between agencies may support more coherent enforcement.

5.2.5 Communication, engagement and priority setting

Both WOAH and its Members may find value in continued communication and engagement to elevate animal welfare during transport as a strategic priority. Many interview participants noted that transport is often perceived as a routine logistical matter rather than a welfare issue linked to animal health, public trust and trade reputation. Increased communication with senior policy-makers and stakeholders may help shift this perception, thereby strengthening mandate, budget allocation and regulatory attention. Several AWFPs explained that frontline officers were willing to enforce standards but lacked political backing, legal authority or institutional support.

Greater recognition of transport welfare within policy agendas may help overcome these practical barriers and allow regulators to act more effectively.

Taken together, these recommendations reflect priorities identified across both phases of this study. AWFPs demonstrated clear interest in advancing implementation and valued the WOAH standards as an important technical reference. With continued guidance, advocacy, train-the-trainer approaches, enhancing leadership in animal welfare, use of the Competency Package on Animal Welfare, and consideration of animal welfare within foundational competencies and opportunities for participation, there is strong potential to translate this intent into more consistent welfare outcomes for animals transported by land and sea.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix A: Phase 1 Survey

Animal Welfare During Transport by Land and Sea: Level of Implementation of WOAH Standards by Members' Veterinary Services

Important Notes

- Please read the instructions and glossary before completing the survey.
- 'Regulatory framework' includes any regulation, directive, law, decree, code of practice, or SOP adopted at national, sub-national, or supra-national level.
- Questions marked with * are mandatory.
- Only one questionnaire per country/territory should be completed.

A. Animal Welfare During Transport by Land

Q1.*
Rank from 1 to 8 the species transported by land for domestic purposes in 2022.
1=most transported, 8=least transported. If not transported, tick N/A.

Cattle: _____ ☐ N/A
Pigs: _____ ☐ N/A
Poultry: _____ ☐ N/A

Q2.*
Rank from 1 to 8 the species transported by land for export purposes in 2022.

Pigs: _____ ☐ N/A
Poultry: _____ ☐ N/A
Small ruminants: _____ ☐ N/A
Camelids: _____ ☐ N/A
Equines: _____ ☐ N/A
Buffaloes: _____ ☐ N/A
Other species: _____ ☐ N/A

Q3.*
Is there a regulatory framework covering animal welfare during transport by land?

☐ Yes
☐ No If No, go to Q18

Q4.* If Yes to Q3
To which species does the regulatory framework apply? Multiple answers allowed.

☐ Cattle
☐ Pigs
☐ Poultry
☐ Small ruminants
☐ Camelids
☐ Equines
☐ Buffaloes
☐ Other: _____

Q5.* If Yes to Q3
At which administrative level are regulatory requirements developed?

☐ Supra-national
☐ National
☐ Sub-national
☐ Municipal
☐ Other: _____

Q6.* If Yes to Q3
Does the regulatory framework include specific approval requirements regarding loading or unloading facilities, vehicles, or containers?

☐ Yes, facilities
☐ Yes, vehicles
☐ Yes, containers
☐ No

Q7.* If Yes to Q3
Does the regulatory framework define responsibilities of the following actors?

☐ Competent Authorities
☐ Animal owners or managers
☐ Exporters
☐ Importers
☐ Business or buying agent
☐ Transport companies
☐ Vehicle owners
☐ Drivers
☐ Animal handlers
☐ Managers at start of journey
☐ Managers at end of journey
☐ Managers at resting points
☐ Other: _____
☐ None

Q8.* If Yes to Q3
Does the regulatory framework include competence requirements for the following actors?

Same list as Q7.

Q9.* If Yes to Q3
Does the regulatory framework require a journey plan to include the following:

☐ Emergency plan
☐ Journey duration
☐ Type of road
☐ Itinerary and resting points
☐ Vehicle and container design and ventilation
☐ Space allowance
☐ Loading or unloading facility characteristics
☐ Weather forecast
☐ Water and feed supply
☐ Not applicable
☐ Other: _____
☐ None

Q10.* If Yes to Q3
Does the regulatory framework include a checklist of actions to ensure compliance?

☐ Yes
☐ No, but plan to develop
☐ No, no plan

Q11.* If Yes to Q3
Are contingency or emergency plans required during transport by land?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Q12.* If Yes to Q3
Does the regulatory framework include an enforcement mechanism?

☐ Yes
☐ No If No, go to Q18

Q13.* If Yes to Q12
At which administrative level is the enforcement mechanism developed?

☐ Supra-national
☐ National
☐ Sub-national
☐ Municipal
☐ Other: _____

Q14.* If Yes to Q12
What type of veterinary inspections are performed?

Location | Physical Inspection | Documentary Check | None
International border posts | ☐ | ☐ | ☐
National checkpoints | ☐ | ☐ | ☐
Before journey | ☐ | ☐ | ☐
On arrival | ☐ | ☐ | ☐
Other | ☐ | ☐ | ☐

Q15.* If Yes to Q12
What proportion of shipments are subjected to at least one physical inspection? Select one option per row.

Options
☐ Every consignment
☐ Proportion random basis
☐ Proportion risk basis
☐ Random proportion
☐ Other
☐ Not applicable

Apply to
International border posts
National checkpoints
Before journey
On arrival
Other

Q16.* If Yes to Q12
What proportion of shipments are subjected to at least one documentary check? Select one option per row.

Options
☐ Every consignment
☐ Certain proportion
☐ Only consignments meeting criteria
☐ Random proportion
☐ Other
☐ Not applicable

Apply to
International border posts
National checkpoints
Before journey
On arrival
Other

Q17.
If Other, please elaborate.

_____

Q18.*
Does your country use non-legislative documents covering animal welfare during transport by land?

☐ Non-regulatory recommendations
☐ Private assurance schemes
☐ ISO 34700
☐ Other: _____
☐ None

Q19.*
Explain the scope of these non-legislative documents and how they work within your regulatory framework.

_____

B. Animal Welfare During Transport by Sea

Q20–Q38 follow the same structure as Q1–Q19 but apply to transport by sea. Replace vehicles with vessels and transport companies with shipping companies where relevant.

C. Final Questions

Q39.*

Is a competent authority other than the Veterinary Authority involved in regulating livestock transport?

☐ Yes
☐ No If No, go to Q41

Q40.*

If Yes, which authority and which aspects?

_____

Q41.*

Has your country been involved in a live animal transport emergency in the last 10 years?

☐ Yes
☐ No If No, go to Q43

Q42.*

If Yes, describe the emergency situation.

_____

Q43.*

To what extent is animal welfare during transport a priority? Select one per

Category | Not a priority | Low | Medium | High | Don't know
Competent authority | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐
Private sector | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐
Consumers | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐

Q44.*

What tools or materials would further support your country.

_____

Q45.

Further comments.

_____

Q46.

Links or materials related to animal welfare during transport.

_____

Q47.*
Country or territory represented.

Q48.*
Would you agree to participate in an interview or focus group?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Q49.*
If Yes, name and contact details.

6.2 Appendix B: Phase 2 Recruitment letters WOAH

Identification of Success Factors and Barriers to the Implementation of Welfare Standards During Transport by Land and Sea
Study Overview & Request for WOAH Region Member Participation

Context
A core element of the mandate for the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) is developing international standards for animal health and welfare based on the latest scientific information. The Observatory is a programme that provides an overview of the uptake of international animal welfare standards by WOAH Members. It contributes to the progressive improvement of standard implementation and provides valuable feedback and recommendations.

Under WOAH's current strategic plan, the Observatory, in collaboration with the Standards department, has commissioned a thematic study to explore the level of implementation of WOAH's animal welfare standards during transport by land and sea by Members' Veterinary Services. This study is now in its second phase (phase one results available here), which focuses on qualitative data collection through interviews and focus groups. The two key objectives are:

1. Identify and analyse key barriers and success factors to implementing welfare standards during transport by land and sea, and
2. Develop strategies and recommendations to overcome the identified barriers.

Interview Request
As part of this study, we are inviting five countries per WOAH region to participate in an interview. This interview offers an opportunity to inform future standards and actions, and the perspective of Members is essential. The interview questions will explore:

- Animal welfare standards and regulatory frameworks in your country
- The realities of animal transport in your country (e.g., journey duration, climatic conditions, financial and human resources, terrain and geographic landscape, infrastructure, species-specific considerations, availability and capacity of livestock transporters)
- Perspectives on key barriers and success factors to implementing WOAH transport standards
- Potential strategies for overcoming identified barriers

Interview Details and Next Steps

Interviews will be conducted by ACER Consulting between **June 2nd and July 14th, 2025**. Delegates and animal welfare focal points from each Member country will be contacted one week after the WOAH General Session in May 2025 to participate in the interview. A representative from ACER Consulting will contact the nominated individual(s) to book a 1-hr interview, which will take place over Zoom. Interviews will be scheduled using a third-party scheduling software (Calendly), to facilitate efficient scheduling, and will be recorded to ensure accuracy in our reporting (note that recordings will not be shared beyond the internal project team). Interviews are planned to be conducted in English; arrangements for an interview in another language may be accommodated upon request.

Interviewees may be asked to complete a short online questionnaire before the interview; we anticipate this to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. This will provide background information on the current status of transport regulations and enforcement by land and sea, which will help inform the interview discussion.

Following the interviews, your Member country may also be selected to participate in an optional virtual focus group to discuss the interview findings and solutions to reduce barriers to implementing welfare standards during transport.

Data Privacy Information

WOAH will not disclose, disseminate or provide access to individual data, including respondent and country/territory names. The study outputs will be based on the analysis of aggregated data, but may include data or quotes attributed to individual respondents if those respondents provide express written permission for this (the project team will contact Members directly with any such requests for permission on an as needed basis). All data collected from Veterinary Authorities will be owned by WOAH, kept confidential and protected in accordance with the WOAH Privacy Policy.

6.3 Appendix C: Part 2 Interview and Focus Group Discussion Guides and Pre-Read Materials

Interview Discussion Guide

- Roundtable introductions
- Overview of goals and objectives
- Data privacy notice
- Permission to record

Integration of WOAH standards:

1. How are WOAH transport standards integrated into existing frameworks in your country?
    a. How are WOAH standards included/covered within frameworks?
        i. *Interviewees who participated in survey 1 can be reminded of their survey answers here (Q12)*
    b. How are WOAH standards being enforced/implemented?
        i. *Interviewees who participated in survey 1 can be reminded of their survey answers here (Q12)*
        ii. What does enforcement/implementation look like (either via frameworks or otherwise)?

2. How are WOAH transport standards considered in the development of new/updated frameworks?
    a. Is there work/discussion around changing or updating current transport regulations?
        i. To what degree is WOAH influential in these discussions?

Success factors for implementing WOAH transport standards:

3. Where do you feel your country has been most successful in achieving alignment with WOAH transport standards?

4. What were the key ingredients for how this alignment/success was achieved?

Barriers to implementing WOAH transport standards:

5. What challenges, if any, exist to including/incorporating/aligning with WOAH standards in your country?
    a. *Prepared for probe, e.g. if they share that they haven't been able to, explore reasons why, factors that have contributed to this.*

6. What challenges, if any, exist to enforcing/implementing WOAH standards?
    a. *Explore reasons why, factors that have contributed to this*
    b. *Probe: how does the political climate in your country impact this?*
    c. Including incorporation into your national legislation?

7. What do you see as some potential strategies to help overcome these barriers?
    a. What do you need from WOAH to support you in better including/ incorporating WOAH standards into your transport framework/regs/ legislation etc.?

8. What, if any, final remarks might you share or do you wish WOAH knew about your country's situation re: animal transport?

9. Would you be willing to participate in a virtual focus group to discuss potential solutions to using and incorporating WOAH standards in the future?

WOAH Transport Standards Focus Group Discussion Guide

Session Title: Advancing Solutions for Integration of WOAH Transport Standards
Duration: 90 minutes
Participants: Previously interviewed country representatives
Facilitator: Core ACER team members

Welcome and Introduction (10 mins)

- Welcome participants and thank them for their ongoing engagement.
- Introduce the goals of the session:
  – To verify we have accurately captured the key barriers
  – To explore actionable solutions to the barriers raised during interviews
- Outline the structure and expectations for participation
- Confirm consent for note-taking and anonymised use of findings

Warm-Up and Framing (10 mins)

Q1. Reflecting on your interview and the themes we have developed thus far, would you say your comments have been accurately captured?

- Are there any key aspects you wish to clarify or further discuss?

Solutions to Key Barriers (30 mins)

Q2. Let's talk about solutions. What practical steps could help address the barriers you or others described (e.g. lack of infrastructure, limited enforcement capacity, lack of clarity in standards)?

- Are there examples of initiatives that have worked well in your country or region?
- What has helped you make progress in any of these areas?

Q3. Have you previously participated in WOAH's standard-setting process? If no, are you aware of the opportunities to take part in WOAH's process to help guide the development of standards?

- If they have not participated and/or are only just aware of the process, why haven't they participated?

Q4. In cases where WOAH standards are seen as too general or hard to apply, what kind of guidance or tools would make implementation easier?

- Would decision trees, case examples or species-specific protocols help?
- What format would be most useful (training materials, templates, videos)?

Q4. Many participants mentioned challenges related to training and awareness. What would effective capacity-building look like in your context?

- Who most needs training (official veterinarians, practicing veterinarians, animal handlers, transporters, regulators, farmers)?
- Would a 'train-the-trainer' model work? Or guidance documents such as a checklist or another kind of process-based document?

Opportunities for WOAH Support (25 mins)

Q5. Where do you see the greatest opportunity for WOAH to provide support for you as it relates to livestock transport by land and sea in the coming years?

Q6. What would make it easier to collaborate across Members, especially between exporters and importers, or higher- and lower-resourced members?

- What kind of forum, platform or support would help enable this?

Closing Insights (15 mins)

Q7. Thinking ahead, what would real progress look like for your country in the next 2–3 years?

- Are there specific changes in regulation, practice or awareness you hope to see?

Thank You and Next Steps (5 mins)

- Recap key themes discussed
- Outline how insights will be used (e.g. to inform the final report and WOAH recommendations)
- Share timeline for next steps and ongoing engagement
- Express appreciation for participants' time and insights.