OBSERVATORY THEMATIC STUDY

Implementation of Welfare Standards During Transport by Land and Sea: Insights from Animal Welfare Focal Points Across WOAH Regions

Most farm animals are transported at least once during their lifetime. Their welfare during transport is a complex and multi-faceted topic. To support Members in ensuring animal welfare during transport, WOAH has developed standards.[1] Following a survey to assess the level of implementation of WOAH's standards by Veterinary Services, a qualitative investigation was conducted with Animal Welfare Focal Points (AWFPs) from each WOAH Region to better understand the success factors and barriers influencing their adoption.

16 Members were interviewed

9 Members participated in the focus groups

June 2025 → October 2025

Interviews explored:

- ☑ Integration of welfare standards during transport by land and sea into national regulatory frameworks
- ☑ Governance, political and infrastructure constraints
- ☑ Practical enforcement realities
- ☑ Success factors supporting alignment
- ☑ Future support needs

Key findings

Enabling factors

Integration into national legislation frameworks

Varies by context, with standards often used as guiding frameworks in mature systems and more directly adopted elsewhere, though operationalisation remains challenging.

Collaboration and Trade Incentives

Progress is supported by interagency collaboration, structured legislative review cycles, and alignment driven by trade requirements.

Barriers to implementation

Structural constraints

Implementation is constrained by geography, staffing shortages, fragmented responsibilities and limited inspection capacity.

Need for practical and operational support

There is a clear need for more operational guidance, including training, model documentation, plain-language resources and opportunities for peer learning and regional collaboration.

Specific challenges in sea transport

includes limited oversight, jurisdictional complexity, travel risks and communication gaps between trading partners.

Fragmented governance

Transport oversight involves multiple authorities, creating ambiguity around accountability.

Political priorities

In some contexts, animal transport is viewed as a logistical or trade issue, rather than a welfare issue.

Next steps for WOAH

- Develop practical operational tools such as model regulations, journey plan templates, contingency guidance and species-specific technical resources.
- Facilitate peer learning networks and regional platforms to support information exchange.
- Enhance cross-sector engagement, particularly with maritime authorities.

Key recommendations for Members

- Strengthen institutional mandates and clarify cross-ministerial responsibilities.
- Invest in training, certification systems, and professional development.
- Improve interagency coordination for maritime oversight.

[1] Chapter 7.2. Transport of animals by sea and Chapter 7.3. Transport of animals by land of the WOAH *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*.

World Organisation for Animal Health

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