



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

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Lord Jay of Ewelme
Chair of the Sub-Committee on the Windsor Framework
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

13 March 2024

Dear Lord Jay,

Re: ANIMAL WELFARE (LIVESTOCK EXPORTS) BILL

Thank you for your letter of 7 March regarding the Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill.

The subject matter of this Bill relates to an area of devolved competence as regards Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In November 2020, ahead of the public consultation on banning live animal exports, then Secretary of State, the Rt Hon George Eustice MP, wrote to then Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Edwin Poots MLA and the Welsh and Scottish Governments about the planned consultation. Following that letter the Welsh Government decided that they would also be party to the consultation, whereas the Scottish Government carried out a separate consultation.

In 2021, George Eustice again wrote to Minister Poots about the proposal to introduce legislation to ban live exports. Minister Poots explained that he was very conscious that the agriculture industry in Northern Ireland depends on the live export trade, mainly to the Republic of Ireland, and that he was therefore not minded to limit the export of live animals from Northern Ireland.

It remains the Government's position that extending the Bill to Northern Ireland would have a devastating impact on farming communities. Extending the Bill to Northern Ireland would end all livestock and horse movements intended for slaughter and fattening, including the export of around 3,500 cattle, 17,000 pigs and 337,000 sheep which were moved into Ireland in 2022. This would be a devastating blow to farmers across Northern Ireland, and put many jobs and livelihoods at risk. EU market access – including the EU rules that underpin it – remains absolutely vital for the sector, and imposing a ban on Northern Ireland's farmers would be an extremely damaging step to take. It is important to be honest that telling farmers in Northern Ireland their access to the EU market is ending for livestock for slaughter and fattening is simply not a step that any responsible Government could take, unless the people of Northern Ireland choose that outcome democratically and it was therefore reflected in a consent vote in the Assembly.

It is crucial that those advocating the extension of the Bill to Northern Ireland are absolutely transparent and honest about what this would mean for farmers; for the equine industry; and for the agri-food sector as a whole.

On the subject of any potential attempts to undermine the intentions of the Bill, we are aiming to create a system which enforces the ban effectively whilst not adding unnecessary burdens for transporters wishing to export animals for permitted purposes. We intend to adapt and build on the existing regime of animal welfare in transport protections which are managed by the Animal and Plant Health Agency and enforced by local authorities.

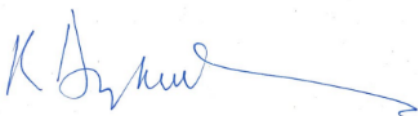
When livestock are moved to Northern Ireland for slaughter, the animals must be moved directly to the slaughterhouse shown on the health certificate. On arrival, the animals and accompanying health certificate must be presented to an officer of the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for checking. When livestock are moved to Northern Ireland for fattening, the animals must be moved directly to the holding of destination, as shown on the health certificate. The animals must remain there for a period of at least 30 days. The person in charge of the relevant holding must advise the local Divisional Veterinary Officer of the animals' arrival. There is a longstanding requirement, predating EU Exit, for Official Veterinarians to certify these consignments prior to their departure from Great Britain.

We are also working closely with DAERA officials to ensure that we will be alerted to any consignments of concern. Colleagues in Defra have close working relationships with their counterparts in DAERA. They regularly meet to discuss issues related to livestock movements, and share information and developments where appropriate. As part of this mutual exchange, volumes of livestock movements in and out of Northern Ireland are closely monitored using data from the Animal and Plant Health Agency and the Trade Control and Expert System.

I trust this clarifies why the Bill does not extend to Northern Ireland, and how the ban will be enforced. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further information.

I am copying this letter to Sir William Cash MP, Chair of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee, George Wilson, Clerk of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee, Rt Hon Sir Robert Buckland MP, Chair of the Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, Les Saunders, EU Document Scrutiny Manager, Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office; John Leach, Departmental Scrutiny Coordinator, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Philip McGuigan MLA, Chair of the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee and Tom Elliott MLA, Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Yours sincerely,



LORD DOUGLAS-MILLER

