Declaration on pig castration: state-of-play one year after launch

Eurogroup for Animals is extremely disappointed that during the ‘Boars Heading for 2018 Conference’ in Amsterdam there was no discussion on the implementation of the first step of the European Declaration on the Alternatives to Surgical Castration of Pigs on 1 January 2012. This requires that all surgical castration of pigs is carried out with either anaesthesia or at least prolonged analgesia.

Castration of piglets is currently widely practised in the EU to stop the development of boar taint which causes pork to smell during cooking. This procedure is routinely carried out without analgesia or anaesthesia and causes pain and suffering to the animals both during the procedure and for some time afterwards.

In December 2010, several leading players in the pig meat chain agreed on a plan to end the surgical castration of pigs in Europe by 1 January 2018 with the launch of the European Declaration on Alternatives to Surgical Castration of Pigs. This declaration, the first of its kind in the EU, is an open invitation for the entire European pig sector to join this voluntary initiative.

One year after its launch, all of the stakeholders met in Amsterdam to reflect on the progress achieved and to explore, develop and work to meet the Declaration’s objectives.

Far from delivering a real timeline, neither the Commission, meat marketers, processors, nor the farmers mentioned during the Conference the changes to castration practices that the Declaration calls for and how they will be implemented. Coupled with this no new signatories have come forward and existing signatories are not spreading the message.

The European Commission has previously committed to work with stakeholders to develop a European partnership to ensure alternatives to castration are developed but at this stage it is not acting to promote the Declaration and encourage farmers to comply with its clear measures.

All details about the Conference can be found at http://www.boars2018.com and for more information on the Declaration, go to http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/initiatives_en.htm

New Animal Welfare Written Declarations

Three Written Declarations linked with Animal Welfare issues have been launched within the European Parliament.

- Written Declaration 46/2011: on the marketing of eggs from hens housed in outlawed cages.
- Written Declaration 49/2011: on the establishment of a maximum 8-hour journey limit for animals transported in the European Union for the purpose of being slaughtered.
- Written declaration N°51: on the electronic identification of sheep (EID).

Every one needs 369 support signatures at least by Q1 2012 to be adopted by the European parliament.


Welfare of animals during transport discussed at Farm Council

At the last meeting of the Council of EU Agriculture Ministers, EU Commissioner for Health and Consumers John Dalli presented the recently published European Commission report on the impact of Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport. He emphasised the need for more harmonisation within the EU rather than introducing stricter rules.

This attitude of the European Commission was widely criticised by a large range of organisations across the EU for going against the scientific advice made by the EFSA and for its lack in providing proper protection to animals in transport [see AIE #22]

In addition, the Danish Minister indicated that this issue will be included among the Danish Presidency priorities for the next semester.
Second Meeting of the Transatlantic Animal Welfare Council

On 1st December, the Transatlantic Animal Welfare Council (TAWC) held its second meeting in Brussels after it’s launch last year in Washington, D.C.

Attended by organisations dedicated to Animal Welfare from both sides of the Atlantic, the Council is designed to enhance co-operation between European and American animal welfare organisations.

This year, the first session offered the possibility to listen and exchange on Animal Welfare and EU-US trade relations with representatives from the European Commission’s DG Trade and DG Health & Consumers. The second session offered TAWC members the possibility to exchange information on upcoming trade issues related to animal welfare and the state of play of trade negotiations and animal welfare in the EU and the USA.

Finally, this meeting was an opportunity to plan future actions that are put on the EU-USA agenda. For more information on the TAWC, go to http://tawc.eurogroupforanimals.org

Provisional agreement on biocidal products reached

The provisional agreement of the European Council and the European Parliament paves the way towards the adoption of the regulation concerning the placing on the market and use of biocidal products, which cover insecticides, disinfectants and repellents.

The text as it stands now was negotiated in “trilogue” meetings between the EU Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission. The purpose of this regulation is to improve the functioning of the internal market through the harmonisation of legislation on biocidal products, while ensuring a high level of protection for both human and animal health and the environment.

With regard to animal welfare, the new regulation should include provisions which limit animal testing by aligning the requirements to modern science and promoting the use of alternative non-animal testing methods.

The European Parliament is expected to adopt its position during the second reading in January 2012 after that the regulation will be officially adopted by the Council in the first half of 2012 and will apply from 1 September 2013.


World Horse Welfare Dossier of Evidence

World Horse Welfare, a horse charity dedicated to improving horse welfare issued the first part of their Dossier of Evidence concentrating on live animals transport and EU Regulation (EC) 1/2005. The document highlights the problems with journey times, water provision and fitness to transport and recommends a finite maximum journey limit of 9-12 hours without exception, for all movements of equidae in accordance with Council Directive 2009/156/EC on animal health conditions governing the movement and imports from third countries of equidae.

The second part of the Dossier of Evidence is expected to be published in 2012 and will cover issues such as space allowance, vehicle design and related issues.


Member States urged to implement EU Zoos Directive

Eurogroup welcomes the call on Member States made by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) recently to fully implement the EU zoos directive to “ensure the highest possible standards in European zoos and aquariums”.

EAZA, the world’s largest international professional zoo and aquarium organisation, wants to see a proper independent and scientific review of how the directive has been implemented in individual member states. EAZA believes that national regulators could do more to enforce implementation.

Indeed, according to the organisation, some Member States have been slow to fully implement the Directive 1999/22/EC relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos and EAZA calls on those countries to follow the excellent examples set by Member States across the EU. For full details, go to http://www.eaza.net/News/newsblog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=113

Disappointing news from Germany for wild animals in circuses

On 15 December, the coalition majority in Germany rejected the bill to ban the use of wild animals in circuses during the plenary session held in the Bundestag, the German Federal Parliament.

It is all the more disappointing that this decision follows the adoption of this bill by the Second Chamber in November, and the wish publicly expressed by Federal Minister of Agriculture Ilse Aigner to include the motion in the government’s welfare package.

The proposal is now expected to be discussed in mid-January at the Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection Committee in the Bundestag.

Intergroup for the welfare and conservation of animals

Next Intergroup meeting

Thursday 19 January 2012

Topic of this 279th session

EU Biodiversity Strategy

Get more information at: www.animalwelfareintergroup.eu

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