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I. INTRODUCTION

Keeping ‘dairy’ cows in tie stall housing systems contradicts welfare guidelines as well as legally binding regulations. However, it is still common practice all over Europe.

Germany is the biggest producer of cow milk in Europe. In 2009 Animals’ Angels has inspected numerous dairy farms all over Germany. More than 

one third of Germany’s ‘dairy’ cows are kept in tie stall housing systems (see table), many of them without pasturing. In small dairy farms (< 30 animals) 85% of German ‘dairy’ cows are tethered.

This compilation report offers an insight into some of the major animal welfare problems inherent in tie stall housing systems. The evidence offered and the requests proposed in this report base on newly gained data from 2009.

Animals’ Angels is currently working on a more detailed report on the topic which will be published later this year.

Table: Occurrence of Dairy Farms with tie stalls housing system in Germany:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal State</th>
<th>Loose housing system</th>
<th>Tie Stalls</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schleswig Holstein</td>
<td>93,6%</td>
<td>6,4%</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecklenburg Vorpommern</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niedersachsen</td>
<td>60% ca.</td>
<td>35% ca.</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachsen-Anhalt</td>
<td>92,1%</td>
<td>7,9%</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandenburg</td>
<td>95% ca.</td>
<td>5% ca.</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordrhein-Westfalen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hessen</td>
<td>40,0%</td>
<td>60,0%</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thüringen</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachsen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheinland-Pfalz</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saarland</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baden-Württemberg</td>
<td>69,3%</td>
<td>30,6%</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayern</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bremen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Germany (in total)</strong></td>
<td><strong>60% ca.</strong></td>
<td><strong>35% ca.</strong></td>
<td><strong>2009</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** Federal Governments of German states, 2009
II ANIMAL WELFARE PROBLEMS IN TIE STALLS

According to the evidence gathered throughout Germany, the following welfare problems are either occurring regularly in tie stalls (no bedding) or are inherent in the keeping method itself (no freedom of movement).

**A) No Freedom of Movement**

Being tied to one spot, the cows are not able to walk, to groom or socially interact with their conspecifics. This entirely contradicts the natural behaviour and needs of the animals.

*(Animals’ Angels, Germany, May 2009)*
B) Insufficient Stall Platform Length

As a consequence of changed breeding criteria in the last decades, the bodies of ‘dairy’ cows have become larger and longer. The majority of dairy farms with tethered systems are old barn buildings which are not suitable to keep today’s large framed cows. The stall platform lengths are often too short and force the animals to stand and lie on grid. This increases not only the risk of claw disorders and teat injuries, it also deeply affects the comfort and well-being of the animals.

(Animals’ Angels, Germany, October 2009)
C) Insufficient Room to lie down

Time and again Animals’ Angels witnessed overcrowded sheds in tie stall housing systems. The number of animals kept in the sheds is often too high. In addition to that, the stall width of old barns is not suitable anymore for today’s large framed high yielding cows. As a consequence it is impossible for all animals to lie down in the shed at the same time. This contradicts the minimum welfare standards for ‘dairy’ cattle demanding enough space for all animals to lie down and rest at the same time.

(Animals’ Angels, Germany, October 2009)
D) Insufficient Bedding

Out of all dairy farms visited by Animals’ Angels in 2009, not one tethered system had sufficient bedding. In a few sheds, saw dust was used. Rubber mats or straw have not been used in any tie stall housing system inspected by Animals’ Angels. The vast majority of tethered cows stand on bare concrete. This has not only deep effects on the comfort and well-being of the animals it also causes an increased risk of claw disorders and problems with joints.

(Animals’ Angels, Germany, May 2009)
III VIOLATIONS

Keeping cows in tie stall housing systems contradicts
B. Cross Compliance provisions
C. European animal welfare standards

A) COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes

“The freedom of movement of an animal, having regard to its species and in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge, must not be restricted in such a way as to cause it unnecessary suffering or injury. Where an animal is continuously or regularly tethered or confined, it must be given the space appropriate to its physiological and ethological needs in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge.” (Annex, Point 7, freedom of movement)

Animals’ Angels states:

- The freedom of movement in tie stalls is restricted in a way that unnecessary suffering is caused. Tie stalls contradict the demand of the regulation for meeting “the physiological and ethological needs” of ‘dairy’ cows.
- For scientific knowledge on the effects of tie-stalls see EFSA 2009: Effects of farming systems on dairy cow welfare and disease.

B) CROSS COMPLIANCE

Council Regulation (EC) 98/58 applies in the framework of Council Regulation (EC) 1782/2003, Chapter 1, Article 4 in combination with Annex III, C. 18. An infringement of (EC) 98/58 leads according to (EC) 1782/2003, Article 6, 7 to a reduction or exclusion of direct payments.

Animals’ Angels states:

- Tie-stalls are restricting the freedom of movement and are therefore violating against Council Regulation (EC) 98/58 and should be sanctioned by a reduction of direct payments.
C) THE FIVE FREEDOMS

The Five Freedoms have been compiled by the Farm Animal Welfare Council, UK, and have been adopted by the Directorate General ‘Health and Consumers’ of the European Commission as a basis for the European animal welfare standards.

1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
2. Freedom from Discomfort - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. Freedom from Fear and Distress - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

Animals’ Angels states:

- Tie-stalls contradict Freedom 2, 4, and 5. Tie-stalls do neither provide “freedom from discomfort by an appropriate environment” (Freedom No. 2) nor “freedom to express normal behaviour by sufficient space” (Freedom No. 4) nor “conditions and treatments which avoid mental suffering” (Freedom No. 5).
IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Review Report illustrates an urgent welfare problem in the keeping methods of ‘dairy’ cows. Tie-stalls exist throughout Europe despite the numerous scientific studies and animal welfare guidelines that point out the highly visible welfare problems of this keeping method.

The dairy industry as well as political bodies often try to downplay the existence of tie-stalls as a phase-out model. It is true that new sheds are usually loose housing systems. However, it is also reality that thousands of farmers still keep their cows in tie-stalls today.

Within the ongoing discussions on the welfare of ‘dairy’ cows, tie stall housing systems have to be included and intensely discussed as one of the major welfare problems in today’s dairy industry.

In view of the presented complex of problems, Animals’ Angels would like to make the following recommendations to solve the existing problems and reduce the suffering of “dairy” cows:

To protect the welfare of “dairy” cows, there is an urgent need for

1) SPECIFIC REGULATIONS
   Regulations and decrees have to be developed that clearly regulate the breeding, keeping, and treatment of “dairy” cows in accordance with animal welfare standards. This also includes the ban of tie-stalls without exceptions.

2) CONTINUOUS INSPECTIONS OF DAIRY FARMERS
   To guarantee that regulations on animal welfare are put into practice, regular inspections are inevitable. According to a study of the FVE\(^1\) from 2006, the percentage of inspected farms varies widely in Europe\(^2\) while it is insufficient in most countries. In Germany for example, the biggest milk producing country in Europe, only 1-2% of all farms get inspected by competent authorities.

3) EFFICIENT SANCTIONING SYSTEMS
   To achieve the enforcement of specific regulations for “dairy” cows and a ban of tie-stalls, violations have to be strictly prosecuted. Together with encouragements for the farmers to abide by the law, prosecution of those who break it is indispensible to inhibit infringements and to ensure the welfare of the animals.

Germany, 12\(^{th}\) July 2010
S. Greger

For questions, demand for further information or any other queries please contact:

Sophie Greger
Project Manager Animals’ Angels
sophie@animals-angels.de

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\(^1\) FVE = Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, Brussels
\(^2\) European countries which have been included in the study: Austria, Czech Rebuclic, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Netherland, Sweden, Switzerland, UK