Dear Mr Birchall,

Our ref: DWO322567
September 2013

LIVE ANIMAL EXPORTS

Thank you for your e-mail dated 5 September, reporting alleged events at Dover port on the evening of 4 September.

There are a number of factual errors in your report. Firstly, AHVLA do not run ‘a one in three’ checking regime at the port. Vehicles are checked on the basis of risk together with a random element. Secondly, AHVLA did not check the vehicle in question following any telephone call or report from the Police Liaison Officer. The vehicle had been pre-selected for a full inspection by AHVLA at the port following the ill health of one of their inspectors which prevented an inspection at the point of loading. Thirdly, there was no evidence that the animals were sick, ill or dehydrated as claimed at various points in your report.

What did in fact happen that evening was that AHVLA inspectors identified vehicle approval irregularities and breaches of the technical rules set out in Annex I to Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005, which resulted in further transport being prohibited. However, there was no ‘terrible stench’ as suggested by some welfare groups nor any immediate indication that the animals welfare had been compromised in any way. Furthermore, inspectors were present when the vehicle unloaded and report that all of the sheep were unloaded without any welfare concerns.

Finally, I would like to clarify that there has never been any ‘promise’ of 100% inspections at the port of departure, whether this is Ramsgate or Dover port. Prior to the events on 12 September 2012, AHVLA carried out inspections either (a) during loading of animals (in approximately 19% of cases) and (b) at the port (in approximately 50% of cases). No vehicle would have been inspected twice in a journey i.e. a consignment inspected on loading would not have been inspected again at the port.

After 12 September last year, Defra re-assessed the risk associated with the trade through Ramsgate, and changed the previous practice. The practice now adopted is that (a) 100% of shipments are inspected on loading, and (b) there are no “inspections” at port. However, instead, Inspectors located at the port carry out “checks” in a selection of cases on the basis described above. The upshot is that, whereas previously full inspections were carried out in respect of approximately 69% of shipments, either on loading or at port, now full inspections are carried out in 100% of cases on loading, and in addition, further checks are carried out in a significant, albeit smaller, section of cases at port.
This increased inspection and checking regime will remain in place as long as Defra Ministers consider that the risk to the welfare of the animals being exported from Dover is sufficient to support a 100% inspection rate upon loading and the risk based/random checking at the port.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Broderick
Defra - Customer Contact Unit