

Protection of animals kept for farming purposes

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The Commission presents a report on the implementation of Council Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes for the period from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2014.

The main conclusions of the report are as follows:

Variations in Member States' reporting: the considerable differences in Member States' reporting make the interpretation and comparison of the data generally more difficult.

An online form was developed in 2012 based on the tables of [Decision 2006/778/EC](#), which

Member States have been using in 2013 and 2014. However **some inconsistencies persist, particularly with respect to domestic fowl**, which makes it impossible to know whether the findings are representative of broiler or laying hen holdings. A similar problem exists for the 'cattle' category that includes both beef and dairy production systems.

Improved implementation of the rules: the general principles and provisions contained in Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes **have contributed to the establishment of a common framework for the welfare of farmed animals** in the EU. The Directive has also supported the Member States in ensuring that these rules are properly enforced and implemented.

The reports indicate that Member States **seem to be working systematically to address any non-compliance identified** and to enforce EU animal welfare rules. This is corroborated by figures from the previous Commission report of 2006 and figures reported by the Member States for 2013 and 2014. There has been **a noticeable improvement in the number of compliant holdings**.

Effect of the last bans: with regard to the latest two measures introduced – **banning unenriched cages for laying hens** (2012) and individual stalls for sows (2013) – the report notes that action taken by the Commission to encourage all Member States to properly enforce these bans has proved effective. Currently, according to information available to the Commission:

- all Member States are compliant and are using either enriched cages or alternative systems for laying hens;
- as regards group housing of sows, 25 Member States are compliant while three have declared full compliance.

In most cases, the data indicates slight improvements between 2013 and 2014. For example:

- the registered compliance for domestic fowl and the requirement relating to '**automatic and mechanical equipment**' increased from 82.1 % to 86.4 %;
- a general improvement was reported from 2013 to 2014 in '**record keeping**' and '**buildings and accommodations**' for the majority of species and production systems.

Some Member States have highlighted the fact that **lack of knowledge** is often the cause of non-compliance and have for this reason introduced measures on training in their action plans for the coming year.

System for surveillance and inspections: Commission audits show that Member States have put in place a risk-based system for selecting sites for inspection. Several Member States describe in detail their system for selecting the holdings to be inspected which also confirms the use of a risk-based approach. Moreover, the Commission noted in its audits that **national officials took action in all cases**. Nevertheless it also found that the measures were insufficient to achieve compliance in three Member States.

Further improvements: the Commission considers it necessary to continue to work with Member States to introduce further improvements in the way compliance with animal welfare rules are reported. For instance, consideration is needed on how best to ensure **the harmonious transfer of the additional data** in the field of animal welfare required under Decision 2006/778/EC, whilst simultaneously keeping administrative burdens to a minimum is needed.

Furthermore, **a better common understanding of existing animal welfare rules** and how they are to be applied and enforced is required. This is particularly true of certain legal requirements for the welfare of pigs. Between 2013 and 2014, data from the Member States data shows that there was only a small increase in breaches registered as regards the provision of manipulable material and that the number of breaches concerning the tail docking of pigs decreased. This is in contrast to the Commission audit reports showing a much higher number of breaches for these two requirements in most of the Member States audited.

It should be noted that [Commission Recommendation \(EU\) 2016/336](#) introduces a number of parameters that are pertinent in reducing tail-biting and lists the characteristics of an optimal enrichment material.

As a minimum, the Commission will continue to monitor compliance with the implementation of Council Directive 98/58/EC. In parallel the Commission considers it essential to **develop further stakeholder dialogues** in order to favour specific initiatives and projects in this field that could be mutually beneficial both from an economic and animal welfare point of view.

Lastly, the adoption of a [Commission proposal on official controls](#) will open the way for the establishment of European Reference Centres for Animal Welfare that could also contribute to further improvements through the creation and exchange of better technical and scientific knowledge.