



Council of the European Union  
General Secretariat

**Brussels, 11 February 2026**

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**WK 2267/2026 INIT**

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#### **MEETING DOCUMENT**

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From:	Presidency
To:	Working Party on Animals and Veterinary Questions (Animal Welfare)
N° Cion doc.:	ST 16405 2023 + ADD 1
Subject:	Working Party on Animals and Veterinary Questions (Animal Welfare) on 17 and 18 February 2026 - Presidency flash

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In view of the above meeting, delegations will find in Annex the Presidency flash.



CY2026.EU

**PRESIDENCY FLASH**

**Working Party on Animals and Veterinary Questions  
(Animal Welfare and Husbandry)**

**17 - 18 February 2026, Brussels**

<b>When</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>Format</b>
17 and 18 February 2026 10:00	LEX 2	2+2

**Dear Colleagues,**

we are pleased to invite you to the first meeting of the Working Party on Animals and Veterinary Questions (Animal Welfare and Husbandry), chaired by the Cyprus Presidency, which will take place on 17th and 18th February 2026 in Brussels.

The Working Party will continue the examination of the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of animals during transport and related operations.

More specifically, discussions will be initiated on specific conditions for the transport of aquatic animals (Annex II) and on technical rules for terrestrial animals (Annex I). For Annex I the discussion will focus on means of transport and containers (Chapter II), transport practices (Chapter III), additional provisions for livestock vessels and container vessels (Chapter IV) and additional provisions for long journeys of terrestrial animals (Chapter VI), in that order.

Time permitting, the Presidency would welcome Delegations' input on how best to organise the text with a view to strengthening coherence and legal clarity concerning the allocation of technical requirements and obligations among the different actors involved in the transport process and related operations.

**1. Annex II: Specific conditions for the transport of aquatic animals**

Based on comments received from Delegations, the Presidency has introduced a series of amendments to Annex II with the intention of improving clarity, proportionality and enforceability. In this context, the aim has been to include general requirements applicable to all aquatic animals. At the same time the empowerment for the Commission to adopt delegated acts concerning the updating of the technical rules included in Annex II can be utilized when new species-specific scientific evidence

becomes available. In addition to EFSA, the European Union reference centre for animal welfare for aquatic animals has been included to support this empowerment.

Movements of aquatic animals by tow boat, as well as the transport of eggs, embryos and larvae of aquatic animals, are proposed to be excluded from the scope of this Regulation. Tow boat use generally involves the movement of cages or net pens where animals remain in their normal aquatic environment and key transport-related welfare risks can be considered relatively low. Eggs, embryos and larvae constitute early life stages with biological characteristics that differ from those of aquatic animals transported at later developmental stages and applying the transport requirements would not be proportionate.

Based on comments received from Delegations, the transport of aquatic animals by well-boats is proposed to be covered by the Regulation. In this context, wells on well-boats are considered containers for aquatic animals and are therefore subject to approval requirements, while well-boats themselves are not considered a means of transport requiring approval.

For coherence with the structure of Annex I, Annex II has been reorganised into three Chapters addressing fitness for transport, means of transport and containers, and transport practices. Consequential amendments have been introduced in the Articles to align with this revised approach.

**Chapter I (Fitness for transport)**

In response to Delegations’ observations the Presidency text broadens the assessment approach for fitness for transport to include species, age, and size, and replaces recent transport history with the more general concept of recent exposure to stressors.

Fitness for transport has been further clarified by refining and expanding the conditions rendering aquatic animals unfit for transport. These include parasite infestations likely to cause suffering, specific injuries such as hemorrhaging, deep lesions and severe emaciation, and moribund conditions. Exemptions are noted for sedated animals or those in a state of torpor due to low temperature. Fasting requirements are made species-specific, and for fish in particular, there is a detailed list of clinical signs.

**Chapter II (Means of transport and containers)**

The Presidency text extends the requirements from road vehicles to means of transport, containers for aquatic animals and their fittings and adds age as an additional factor to consider when determining their appropriateness. New requirements include that means of transport and containers for aquatic animals including their fittings must be designed and operated to avoid injury, protect animals from extreme temperatures, prevent escape or falls, minimize noise and vibrations, and allow for easy cleaning and disinfection.

**Chapter III (Transport practices)**

Considering Delegations’ suggestions, provisions have been introduced for the handling of aquatic animals which must be gentle and tailored to the species, age, and size of the animals. Lifting is prohibited not only by the gills but also by any appendages such as fins, legs, antennae, or claws. A new point addresses aquatic animals transported in water, specifying that any handling outside the water must be kept as brief as possible, reinforcing the principle of minimizing stress during transport operations. The need for acclimatization and the homogeneity of animal size to prevent aggressive



behavior have been included prior to loading. A proactive provision has also been introduced that if the assessment reveals potential welfare risks, corrective measures must be taken before loading.

Provisions on the monitoring of water parameters have been amended by the deletion of carbon dioxide and ammonia due to practical technical constraints during transport, and the addition of pH and, where relevant, salinity, together with more specific rules on when monitoring is to take place. New general requirements have been included for the transport of aquatic animals in bags, addressing associated welfare risks. At the same time, provisions governing transport out of water have been included to address specific welfare risks. Requirements relating to post-transport practices have been deleted, as obligations concerning the monitoring of aquatic animals, record-keeping, the evaluation of problems and the implementation of mitigation measures are covered by Articles 25 and 26. Article 25(2) has been amended to cover the isolation and examination of ill aquatic animals. In addition, the requirement for the killing of aquatic animals during transport has been deleted due to feasibility constraints and is proposed to apply only at the place of destination.

## 2. Annex I: Technical rules on terrestrial animals

Reflecting Delegations' input, the Presidency has introduced a number of changes to the provisions included in Chapters II (means of transport and containers), Chapter III (transport practices), Chapter IV (additional provisions for livestock vessels and container vessels) and Chapter VI (additional provisions for long journeys of terrestrial animals), as follows.

### Chapter II: Means of transport and containers

The general requirements applicable to all means of transport and containers have been amended with aim to avoid duplication and improve consistency. References to wild animals have been removed, as Annex I applies only to terrestrial animals as they are defined in Article 3. Provisions on feeding and watering intervals have been deleted since these matters are already regulated in Chapter V of Annex I. Container-related provisions have been regrouped in order to improve readability. In addition, certain requirements, such as the provision of bedding, initially placed in Chapter II, have been moved to Chapter III, as they relate to transport practices rather than to means of transport and containers.

A requirement for means of transport to be equipped with a roof, regardless of the duration of the journey, has been included. Provisions on watering devices have been added for vehicles used for short journeys, reflecting situations where water must be provided under Chapter V. At the same time, the provisions on access to animals and lighting have been adjusted to allow a proportionate application of the rules, by clarifying that means of transport and containers, including their fittings allow for checking, feeding and hydration when required and by permitting the use of portable lighting for short journeys. In light of these amendments, the specific exemption previously foreseen for containers used for the transport of poultry and weaned farmed lagomorphs is proposed to be deleted. The requirement to carry means of killing during rail transport has been deleted, as emergency killing is already addressed in the contingency planning provisions. Furthermore, the requirement for temperature and humidity sensors for dogs and cats has been removed, as temperature monitoring requirements are covered by article 24a and no obligation exists to monitor humidity.



### Chapter III: Transport practices

A number of provisions have been reorganised or relocated in order to group together requirements of a similar nature. References to wild animals and fur animals have been removed as they fall outside the scope of Annex I which concerns technical rules for terrestrial animals. Certain points have been deleted where the same requirements are already addressed in the Articles or in other Chapters of Annex I, notably as regards feeding and watering at handling facilities and during transport.

The provisions on the use of instruments that administer electric shocks have been amended so that these instruments may be used as a last resort on bovine animals older than six months or porcine animals over 80 kg and under specific conditions. In addition, a new requirement has been included for written documentation to be available in exceptional cases where sedatives or tranquillisers are used. For the protection of lactating females, a provision has been added requiring that, where milking during transport is not possible, lactating females shall not be separated from their offspring for more than 12 hours.

On minimum ceiling height, the Presidency proposes a compromise approach as follows:

- To strike a balance between the Delegations' views regarding animals of the bovine species, the minimum ceiling height is proposed to vary according to the duration of the journey.
  - For long journeys, the equation included in the initial proposal is retained, with 20 cm replaced by 10 cm, i.e.  $H = W \times 1.17 + [10]$  cm. It is reminded that according to EFSA scientific opinion on the welfare of cattle during transport, the formula of  $H = W \times 1.17 + 20$  cm corresponds to at least 40 cm above the withers for adult cattle. Therefore, the proposed formula corresponds to at least 30 cm above the withers for adult cattle.
  - For short journeys, a minimum ceiling height of [20] cm above the withers of the tallest animal is proposed.
- For animals of the porcine species, a quantitative approach is introduced, setting a minimum ceiling height of [15] cm above the highest point of the tallest animal in a standing position.
- For animals of the ovine species, the initial proposal is retained: 15 cm above the highest point of the tallest animal in a standing position with mechanical ventilation, and 30 cm with natural ventilation. For coherence purposes, it is proposed that the same ceiling height shall apply to animals of the caprine species also. This ceiling height is in line with the recommendation included in the EFSA scientific opinion for the welfare of small ruminants during transport.
- For animals of the equine species, the initial proposal is retained: 75 cm above the withers of the tallest animal. This ceiling height is in line with the EFSA scientific opinion on the welfare of equidae during transport and is already included in the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005.
- For poultry, the initial approach is retained: container height shall ensure that the comb or head does not touch the ceiling when birds are in a sitting position with head and neck in a natural posture. The reference to accommodating changes of position is proposed to be deleted as including additional provisions for changes in position could introduce unnecessary complexity without providing meaningful benefits, as the natural sitting posture already represents the most relevant scenario for container height.
- For farmed lagomorphs, the height shall be sufficient to allow the animals to be in a crouched position without their ears touching the ceiling, with no distinction between slaughter and other



categories of lagomorphs. The term 'crouching' has been preferred over 'sitting', as lagomorphs naturally assume a crouched posture during transport.

For reasons of coherence, it is suggested that these ceiling-height provisions be moved to Chapter VII of Annex I, together with the other requirements on space allowance.

**Chapter IV: Additional provisions for livestock vessels and container vessels**

The initial proposal provides for the verification of strength calculations of pen rails and decks on livestock vessels by a classification society approved by the competent authority. In order to clarify which entity is responsible for this verification, it is proposed that this task be carried out by a recognised organisation as defined in Regulation (EC) No 391/2009 and authorised in accordance with Directive 2009/15/EC in one of the Member States. Delegations are reminded that the same wording has already been introduced in Article 13(2)(c) concerning the certificate of classification of the livestock vessel to be included in the application for a certificate of approval of such a vessel.

The requirements on ventilation systems for livestock vessels have been strengthened with the addition of a minimum air velocity of 0.5 m/s throughout all decks, in order to ensure effective air circulation.

Provisions on water supply and distribution have been enhanced by requiring that storage tanks for fresh water be used exclusively for the animals, clearly marked as such, and properly maintained. A requirement has also been added that each pen be equipped with an adequate number of properly designed and positioned watering devices, in order to ensure access to water for all animals and to minimise aggressive or competitive behaviour, taking into account their species, category and size. In addition, specific provisions have been introduced for feeding equipment to ensure species-appropriate design and prevent injuries during transport.

In addition to the firefighting system already provided for, a requirement for a fire detection system has been introduced. The establishment of a minimum capacity of the hospital pens in livestock vessels is also proposed in order to ensure the availability of adequate facilities for the isolation and care of animals requiring special attention during the journey. To this end a minimum capacity of at least 0,5% of the total number of animals being transported is proposed.

Requirements on environmental monitoring have been strengthened by providing that humidity and temperature sensors on each deck be positioned to ensure representative measurements for the entire deck, and that livestock vessels be equipped with ammonia sensors, which may be portable. In addition, a minimum daily frequency for the measurement of humidity, temperature and ammonia levels on each deck is set, in order to allow timely detection and management of conditions that may adversely affect animal welfare.

Requirements on feed, water and bedding supplies have been amended by providing that livestock vessels and container vessels carry sufficient feed, water and bedding to cover both the loading operations and the intended journey, together with an additional contingency supply of at least [25%] or three days, whichever is greater. It is also proposed that contingency plans shall include arrangements for additional supply of feed and water in case the contingency supply is insufficient. A derogation is proposed for vessels equipped with a functional desalination system, allowing for a water tank capacity of a minimum two-day supply of fresh water.



Requirements on ceiling height have been introduced. A minimum of [2 meters] for pens on livestock vessels, and an adaptable height based on species for containers carrying large animals on container vessels.

Finally, specific additional provisions for container vessels have been also introduced, including requirements on the placement of containers for large animals to protect them from adverse weather conditions and to allow access for animal welfare officers, as well as requirements to avoid undue delays during loading and unloading.

### Chapter VI: Additional provisions for long journeys of terrestrial animals

The requirements on roofs have been clarified by specifying that only vehicles not equipped with a temperature control system must be fitted with a properly insulated and light-coloured roof. Also, as previously discussed in the Working Party, an obligation has been introduced to replace bedding on road vehicles when animals are unloaded at control posts.

Requirements on vehicle ventilation systems have been strengthened to ensure that they can operate at all times, whether the vehicle is stationary or moving, and for the entire duration of the journey, including when vehicles are on board roll-on/roll-off vessels. This is particularly relevant for vehicles on enclosed decks, where, in the event of a failure of the vessel's forced ventilation system, vehicle ventilation must be able to operate using the vessel's electrical supply. In addition, the minimum airflow of 60 m<sup>3</sup>/h per kN of payload, already provided for in Regulation (EC) No 1/2005, has been included, together with a requirement that the system be capable of operating independently of the vehicle engine for at least six hours.

## 3. Proposed amendments to Annex Va

Proposals for amendments to Annex Va are set out in point 3.3(iii) of Chapter III of Annex II and in point 2 of Chapter IV of Annex I, as follows:

- (a) In point 3.3(iii) of Chapter III of Annex II, a new point 1(e) is proposed, requiring that, in the case of long journeys by road of aquatic animals, contingency plans include locations for replacing water where necessary.
- (b) In point 2 of Chapter IV of Annex I, a new point is proposed, requiring that, the contingency plan shall include arrangements for additional supply of feed and water in case the contingency supply is insufficient.

## 4. Amendments to Articles

Based on comments received from Delegations, the transport of aquatic animals by well-boats is proposed to be covered by the Regulation. To this end, a definition of *well-boat* as *a vessel which has a well or tank for the storage, transport or treatment of aquatic animals in water* has been included in Article 3. This definition is aligned with Delegated Regulation 2020/990 supplementing Regulation (EU)



2016/429, as regards animal health and certification requirements for movements within the Union of aquatic animals and products of animal origin from aquatic animals.

As previously discussed in the Working Party, a definition of container for aquatic animals has been added. According to the definition, ‘container for aquatic animals’ means any crate, box, receptacle, well, tank or other rigid structure used for the transport of aquatic animals which is not a means of transport.

The definition of ‘container vessel’ has been technically clarified to align with the definition of containers for large animals, thereby avoiding unnecessary repetition of species references.

Also, well-boats and container vessels have been included in the relevant provisions concerning type 2 transporter authorisation (Article 8), transport documentation (Article 14a), journey log (Article 15), obligations for organisers, transporters, masters and animal welfare officers (Article 21), and the certificate for transport of animals to third countries (Article 33). Therefore, it is proposed that for these types of transport a type 2 authorisation shall be required and an animal welfare officer shall be on board during transport.

In addition, a definition of a ‘European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare’ has also been introduced.

Further amendments aim to allocate the technical requirements among the different actors’ obligations. These concern, in particular, technical requirements of Annex II and the obligations for keepers at the place of departure (Article 17), attendants (Article 19), keepers at assembly centres, control posts and handling facilities (Article 20), transporters and animal welfare officers (Article 21) and keepers at the place of destination (Article 25).

Following the amendments to Annex I, it is proposed that the technical rules for which the Commission is empowered to adopt delegated acts are extended to cover the whole Annex and not only Chapters I, II, V and VI. Furthermore, in addition to the EFSA scientific opinions, the scientific and technical studies and recommendations developed by the European Union reference centres for animal welfare have been included in the technical progress and scientific developments that should be taken into account for this process.

Finally, a 10 year transitional period has been included for the application of Article 13(2), point (c) and point 1.1 of Chapter IV of Annex I concerning the certificate of classification of a livestock vessel and the verification of strength calculations of pen rails and decks on livestock vessels by a recognised organisation as defined in Regulation (EC) No 391/2009 and authorised in accordance with Directive 2009/15/EC, as these requirements are expected to have an impact on the availability of livestock vessels.

## 5. Technical Requirements and Obligations: Findings and Considerations

The Presidency would like to address an important issue that concerns the presentation of technical requirements and the allocation of obligations to the various actors involved in the transport process and related operations. Several approaches have been applied so far, each with its merits and practical considerations. The findings identified in this regard are set out below. Identifying a harmonised and



coherent way to present these requirements and obligations would promote clarity and consistency supporting efficient implementation and shared understanding among all actors involved.

Finding 1:

Technical requirements are included directly in the relevant Articles as part of the obligations of the respective actors, without corresponding provisions in the Annexes.

Example: The frequency of consignment checks during road or rail transport is set out in Articles 19 and 21 as obligations for attendants and animal welfare officers. This requirement is not addressed in the Annexes.

Finding 2:

Technical requirements remain in the Annexes, without specifying which actors are responsible. The Articles refer to the relevant points in the Annexes to assign these obligations to specific actors.

Example: The frequency of monitoring water parameters for aquatic animals is set out in Chapter III of Annex II. Articles 19(0b) and 21 assign the corresponding obligations to attendants and animal welfare officers by referencing the Annex.

Finding 3:

Technical requirements remain in the Annexes and include the allocation of obligations to specific actors. The Articles then cite these points to reassign the obligations within the text.

Example: Technical requirements at assembly centres, control posts, and handling facilities at ports and airports are set out in Chapter V of Annex I, including the allocation of obligations. Article 20 cites Chapter V of Annex I to reassign these obligations to keepers at the relevant facilities.

Finding 4:

Technical requirements remain in the Annexes without allocation of obligations to specific actors, and no assignment of obligations is provided in the Articles.

Example: Chapter VII of Annex I sets out requirements for space allowance without specifying which actors are responsible, and there is no corresponding allocation of obligations in the Articles yet.

In view of the findings described, the Presidency would welcome Delegations' views on the most effective way to present technical requirements and obligations. Delegations are invited to share any alternative approaches or suggestions they consider appropriate, with a view to achieving a clear, coherent, and user-friendly structure that facilitates understanding and implementation for all actors involved.

With regard to the transport of aquatic animals, and in order to facilitate the identification and allocation of responsibilities among the various actors, a table has been prepared and is set out in Annex I to this document.



## 6. Next steps

Consultations on Chapters VIII (art. 39 - 41), IX, X, XI & XII of the revised consolidated articles has been launched on Delegates Portal. Delegations are invited to submit their comments in that platform no later than 06 March 2026.

The next meeting of the Working Party will take place on 21st and 22nd April 2026 and will focus on the above-mentioned Chapters of the Regulation.

## 7. Any other business

Delegations that would like to raise any other business during the meeting are kindly requested to inform the General Secretariat of the Council (LIFE.3@consilium.europa.eu) as well as the Chairs of the Presidency team, [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) and [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]), in advance of the meeting. The helpful support by the General Secretariat of the Council is highly appreciated.

We are looking forward to seeing you in Brussels.

Kind regards,

The Cyprus Presidency team.



**Summary of obligations for Annex II – Aquatic animals**

Point in Annex II	Actor(s) responsible	Corresponding articles where the obligations are placed
Chapter I (Fitness for transport)	Keeper (Prior to departure)	Article 17(1)
Chapter II (Means of transport and containers for aquatic animals)	Owner of the means of transport or of the container for aquatic animals	Article 12a(1)(iii)
Point 1 of Chapter III (Handling)	Keeper (Prior to departure)	Article 17(2)
	Keepers at handling facilities at airports and ports	Article 20(1)
	Animal Welfare Officer (well-boats)	Article 21(3)
	Transporter to ensure that staff handling animals on well-boats comply with	Article 21(0)
	Keeper at the place of destination	Article 25(0)
	Attendant	Article 19(4b)
Point 2.1 of Chapter III (Assessment prior to loading)	Keeper (Prior to departure)	Article 17(2)
Point 2.2 of Chapter III (Loading practices: avoid injury and stress during loading)	Keeper (Prior to departure)	Article 17(2)
	Keeper at handling facilities at airports and ports'	Article 20(1)
	Transporter to ensure that staff handling animals on well-boats comply with	Article 21(0)
Point 2.3 of Chapter III (Loading practices: density)	Keeper (Prior to departure)	Article 17(2)



Point 2.4 of Chapter III (Loading practices: containers to be secured)	Attendant	Article 19(0b)
Point 3 of Chapter III (Water)	Attendant	Article 19(0b)
	Animal Welfare Officer	Article 21(3)
Point 4 of Chapter III (Unloading practices)	Transporter to ensure that staff handling animals on well-boats' comply with	Article 21(0)
	Keeper at the place of destination	Article 25(0)
	Keeper at handling facilities at airports and ports	Article 20(1)
Point 5 of Chapter III (Aquatic animals in bags)	Keeper (Prior to departure)	Article 17(2)
Point 6 of Chapter III (Aquatic animals transported out of water)	Keeper (Prior to departure)	Article 17(2)



## The first cat companions: Ancient Cyprus and the origin of cat taming

In the early Neolithic village of Shillourokambos, on the southern coast of Cyprus, archaeologists made a remarkable discovery: the earliest known evidence of cat taming.

A cat skeleton was unearthed, intentionally buried just 20 cm from a human grave. Both bodies were carefully positioned and aligned. The human grave contained rich offerings, implying that the individual likely held an esteemed social status in the village. The cat’s remains were identified as belonging to an eight-month-old *Felis silvestris lybica*, the wildcat species native to the Middle East and North Africa.

This occurred around 9,500 years ago. The cat still resembled a wild animal, with no signs of domestication. This represents the earliest known evidence of taming, when humans and animals begin to live together long before breeding changes take place.

The fact that the human and the feline were buried together strongly suggests a relationship of respect or companionship rather than one of utility. It is among the earliest pieces of evidence that humans were forming emotional and symbolic bonds with animals.

It’s a connection that transformed both species and continues to enrich our lives to this day. It began in places like Shillourokambos, where a wildcat and a person shared a life and, eventually, a grave.

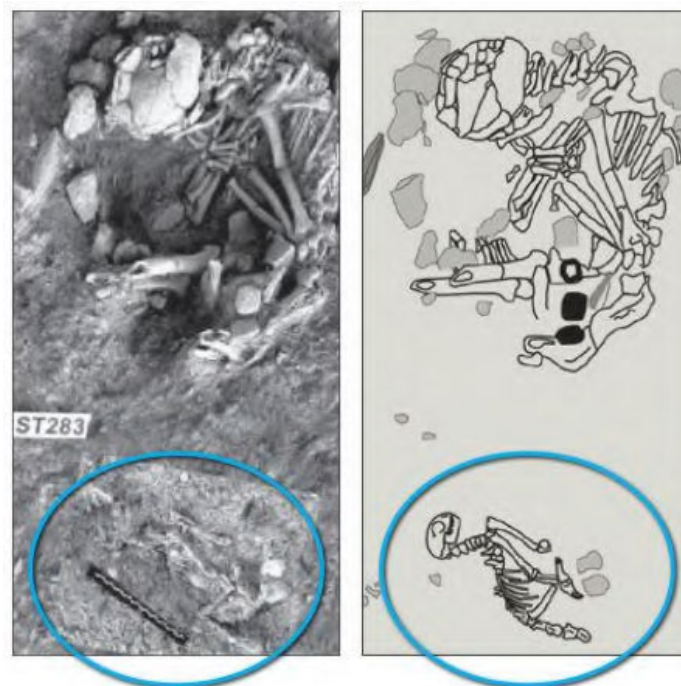


Photo: From “The Taming of the Cat,” by C. A. Driscoll, J. Clutton-Brock, A. C. Kitchener, & S. J. O’Brien, 2009, *Scientific American*, 300(6), p. 68. Copyright 2009 by Scientific American.

