

The welfare implications of the transport of pigs: The scientific background of current international loading density standards

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A review was conducted of current Canadian recommendations and regulations on pig welfare during transport. Canadian standards were then compared with international standards and current scientific literature. Focusing on loading density during transport, we limited our comparison to the US, EU, UK, Ireland, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. The current Canadian Health of Animals Act prohibits the overcrowding of animals in transit while quantitative loading density limits are not specified. In comparison, the 2001 Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals –Transportation recommends a space allowance of approximately 0.36 m²/100 kg pig and notes swine are often transported lying down. Canada's current space allowance guidelines tend to agree with those recommended in the US, Australia, and New Zealand. However, below 50 kg and above 100 kg, few space allowance recommendations are provided by the US, Australia, or New Zealand. Using equations to compare Canada's space allowance recommendations to those of the US, Australia, and New Zealand at weights above 100 kg, Canada provides for more space per animal than these three countries. However, the EU and Ireland recommend a greater space allowance (0.425 m²/100kg) than Canada (0.36 m²/100kg), with the greatest space allowance being recommended by the US at 0.50 m²/100 kg. South Africa recommends the least amount of space per animal at a mere 0.30 m²/100 kg. The scientific literature on posture during transport suggests that space allowances of animals in Canada should be greater than 0.36 m²/100 kg but not exceed 0.425 m²/100kg.

Thus, if Canada increased its current space allowance guidelines, it would fall more in line with both the scientific literature and the EU.