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TRANSPORTING AQUATIC LIVESTOCK CODE



Transporting aquatic livestock

Key principles

Transport of aquatic organisms should be undertaken in a manner that does not cause unnecessary stress to aquatic organisms or compromise biosecurity.

It is an offence to transport aquatic organisms in a way that will cause injury or unnecessary suffering. All animals must be transported in a means of transport which takes into consideration the conditions required for the animals such as space, ventilation, temperature, security, liquid and oxygen needed.

Aquatic organisms must be transported to their destination as quickly as practicably possible.

All transportation undertaken in the UK must comply with the relevant legal requirements.

This document can be used by anyone transporting aquatic livestock from one business to another, although the relevant packing standards below are also suitable for retailers selling directly to consumers. This document outlines the minimum legal requirements that must be met and the additional standards expected of OATA members.

Planning

If transporting fish as part of an economic activity, the business must meet some legal requirements. This applies to all depots, franchises and businesses offering courier services to transport aquatic organisms within the UK, alongside any businesses, such as wholesalers or retailers, using or offering their own delivery or transport service.

Transporter authorisation

You must have a transporter authorisation if you transport live vertebrate animals, such as ornamental fish, by air, sea, rail or road in the UK as part of an economic activity (a business or trade), for a distance over 65km. You will need either a:

Type 1 transporter authorisation for journeys over 65km and up to 8 hours

Type 2 transporter authorisation for journeys over 8 hours with conditions added as required

A journey is defined as “the entire transport operation from the place of departure to the place of destination, including any unloading, accommodation and loading occurring at intermediate points in the journey”. Therefore, the transporter will need to take into account the entire journey time of the animal and not just the section of the journey which the transporter is undertaking.

Transporter authorisation can be obtained from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) if based in Great Britain (GB) or hold GB representation. Businesses based in

Northern Ireland will need to apply to Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

Accompanying documentation

Where fish are transported by means of a container that is watertight and airtight and is no larger than one cubic metre all journeys must be accompanied by a label or document which lists:

- ▶ its contents (e.g. ornamental fish),
- ▶ its place of origin (i.e. the place the fish originally started their journey)
- ▶ any place of transit, and
- ▶ its place of destination.

Where the container does not meet the above requirements an Animal Transport Certificate (ATC) must accompany all journeys. This can be in any format (paper or electronic) and should include the following information:

- ▶ Origin of animals (i.e. the place the fish originally started their journey)
- ▶ The name and address of the legal owner of the animals
- ▶ Name and address of the transporter
- ▶ Place of departure and destination
- ▶ Date and time of departure
- ▶ Expected duration of journey (see definition above)

It is the responsibility of the sender to provide the appropriate documentation.

Consignments should not be shipped without it as it is the transporter's responsibility to ensure it is carried in the vehicle and provided on request. Failure to provide it on request is an offence. Therefore, if it is carried in electronic format, provision should be made so that a copy can be shown upon request if there is a technical fault such as power failure/lack of signal/damage to the device on which it is stored.

Vehicle approval

All vehicles used should be taxed, covered by insurance and have a valid MOT certificate if required.

Road vehicles do not need to be inspected by a certifying body when transporting correctly packaged ornamental fish in individual boxes. However, any vehicle travelling over 12 hours which contains either fish in "tanks", reptiles or amphibians will need vehicle approval from a certifying body. If a certification is given, it can be valid for up to 5 years.

Again, the vehicle approval requirements are based on the entire journey of the animal and not just the section of the journey which the transporter is undertaking.

Contingency planning

Although guidelines state contingency plans are only required for journeys over 8 hours for live ornamental fish, we recommend that a contingency plan is in place for all journeys as all transporters are legally responsible to ensure that the journey is minimised and the animal's needs are met during the journey. A contingency plan should include a plan of action in the event an emergency occurs during the journey. In the case of a journey with multiple pick-

ups and drop-offs, only one contingency plan is required to cover the whole journey. A template for a contingency plan can be obtained from APHA. It should detail:

- ▶ The sender's address and contact details to return the consignment to, should there be any issues during shipment.
- ▶ The details of a recovery company and/or cover driver to ensure the shipment can continue its journey or goods can be returned to the sender as quickly as possible should there be an accident or breakdown.

The sender should be contacted as soon as possible to advise on the best course of action or to assist in recovery of the shipment should any issues arise during transport.

Packing standards

It is the responsibility of the sender to package consignments correctly. Therefore, the sender is responsible for ensuring:

- ▶ Details of the aquatic organisms being transported should be provided, e.g. "ornamental fish".
- ▶ Only healthy aquatic organisms, fit for the intended journey, are being shipped.
- ▶ Only one species is packed per bag
- ▶ Aquatic organisms are bagged in bags of appropriate thickness (at least 0.03mm/120 gauge thick).
- ▶ Double bags are used where appropriate (e.g. for species with spines).
- ▶ Bags are sealed tightly with elastic bands, plastic ties or metal clips to ensure water does not leak.
- ▶ A liner bag is placed inside the container to prevent any water leaking from bags exiting the box.
- ▶ Aquatic organisms are mixed 1/3 water, 2/3 oxygen or air as appropriate to the species and journey time.
- ▶ Bags are not overstocked.
- ▶ Bags are placed within an appropriate box.
- ▶ Bags are positioned in a secure, upright way.
- ▶ Boxes are kept within the required temperature range for that species for the duration of the journey (through the use of heat/ice packs as required).
- ▶ All boxes should be clearly marked with at least "Live fish" and "This way up" when transporting live ornamental fish. It is also recommended that "Fragile" and "Urgent" are used.

If using a third-party courier, it is important that the courier is satisfied shipments have been packaged in an appropriate way. However, it would be detrimental to animal welfare and logistically difficult for the courier to manually inspect all shipments. Therefore, the courier service provider should have the above standards for transporting aquatic organisms incorporated in its terms and conditions which should be signed by the client. Couriers have the right to refuse boxes if they are obviously badly packaged.

During transport

It is important that livestock is handled appropriately during transport so that water parameters remain in safe ranges and livestock is exposed to as little stress as possible.

Therefore, it is important to ensure:

- ▶ Boxes are not exposed to excessive temperatures (caused by strong sunshine, cold winds or frost) or rough handling.
- ▶ Boxes remain upright during transport and secured, as appropriate, to prevent movement.
- ▶ No heavy objects are stacked on top of boxes containing aquatic organisms.
- ▶ Fish in closed boxes should not be fed or examined during transport except for official purposes or to benefit welfare.
- ▶ It should be possible to contact the driver during their journey when transporting live ornamental fish.

Delivery/receiving fish

Packages should always be signed for by an appropriate person over 16 and should not be left without supervision. Any relevant paperwork should be passed to the receiving party.

On receipt of boxes

- ▶ Check that the correct boxes have been delivered
- ▶ Check that the correct number of boxes have been delivered
- ▶ Check the condition of the boxes (e.g. for damage or boxes opened by officials)

Handling of boxes

- ▶ Boxes should be handled carefully. They should not be dropped, even a couple of inches
- ▶ If necessary, prior to unpacking, they should be stacked carefully out of extremes of temperature, draughts and strong sunlight

Opening boxes

- ▶ Boxes should be opened as promptly as possible
- ▶ Boxes should be opened carefully in an area of dimmed light
- ▶ Appropriate investigations should be undertaken and reports made of any problems, e.g. split bags, cloudy water, mortalities etc

Unpacking fish

Boxes should be opened as promptly as possible – there should be no unnecessary delays in opening.

Anyone unpacking boxes should be:

- ▶ Aware of the fishes':
 - actual transit time
 - packing density

- origin – wholesaler or other source in the UK, source not in the UK, farmed or wild caught
- pre-journey rest, pre-acclimatisation to destination conditions, effective treatments, fasting prior to transport
- ▶ Sufficiently experienced or trained to handle the shipment being unpacked, given the above

Bags of fish must be equilibrated with temperature and water conditions in receiving systems in an appropriate manner, preferably using a standard operating procedure (SOP) formally or informally used and validated by the business.

Ideally, livestock should be placed in isolated tanks or vats or, failing that, systems with ultraviolet sterilisers fitted.

Deciding when fish are fit for sale

Anyone making the decision that fish are fit for sale need to be aware of the normal behaviour, feeding patterns and colouration of species concerned taking account of the source, age, development stage and sex of the species in question. The time following unpacking before fish should be sold will be variable.

Members are reminded that the [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) applies to both individuals and to corporations (via managers or Directors). This means either an individual and/or business could be called to account for their decisions in criminal law





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