April 23, 2024

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

℅ Nicole Al-Heeh - Inspection Manager, Western Area Operations

Room 613, 269 Main Street

Winnipeg, MB R3C 1B2

***Via email***

Dear Ms. Al-Heeh,

**Re: Violations of Health of Animals Regulations and *Animal Care Act* During Export of Horses**

I am writing to request that you investigate and take enforcement action following the transport of live horses on January 22, 2024, in a manner that appears to contravene the Health of Animals Regulations.

On January 22, 2024 approximately 99 horses were sent on Korean Air Cargo flight number 9214 from Winnipeg to Kansai International Airport in Izumisano, Japan. The horses, most aged approximately 18 months, were loaded three per wooden crate and, as is usual practice, had a layover in Alaska before crossing the ocean to Japan. We recently learned via Access to Information request that the shipment was in violation of s 152.2 of the Health of Animals Regulations.

The horses were loaded into trucks at their feedlot in Manitoba beginning at 5:15pm on January 21, 2024. We do not know how long prior to loading that the animals’ access to food and water and opportunity rest ended. Based on past shipments, the horses likely traveled to Winnipeg from a feedlot in Swan River– a journey by road that takes approximately 5.25 hours.

Those responsible for the shipment learned at 10:45pm that the flight to Alaska was delayed by 2 hours. Based on known travel times, this meant the shipment would violate the 28 hour legal limit for transporting horses without food, water, and rest. The horses were shipped anyways.

In the end, we estimate that from the time the horses were loaded at the feedlot in Manitoba to the time that they arrived at Kansai International Airport, they were in transit without food, water, and rest for just under 30 hours. This breakdown is as follows:

Jan. 21 5:15pm CT (loading in truck) - Jan 22 7:59am CT (departure from Wpg) - 14h 46m

Jan. 22 7:59am CT (departure from Wpg) - 12:41pm CT (arrival in ANC) - 4h 42m

Jan 22 12:41pm CT (arrival in ANC) - 1:57pm CT (departure from ANC)- 1h 11m

Jan 22 1:57pm CT (departure from ANC) - 10:56pm CT (arrival in KIX)- 7hr 59min

Total: 29hr 44min

It is important to note that horses are not provided with food and water, and given the opportunity to rest, the moment their plane touches down in Japan. The horses’ crates must all be unloaded from the plane. The 99 horses were then removed from those crates, put onto trucks, and then driven to the quarantine feedlot. Based on industry representatives’ statements we understand that this process takes two hours or more. As such, these 99 horses were in transit without food, water, and rest for approximately 32 hours (a conservative estimate that does not taken into account the fact that food, water, and rest were almost certainly withheld prior to loading at 5:15pm CT on January 21). This is a clear violation of the Health of Animals Regulations. Section 152.2(1)(c) of the Regulations states that horses can be transported for a maximum of 28 hours without food water or rest. This 28 hour maximum is already extremely long and out of step with generally recognized best practices of capping horses’ transport at 12 hours.

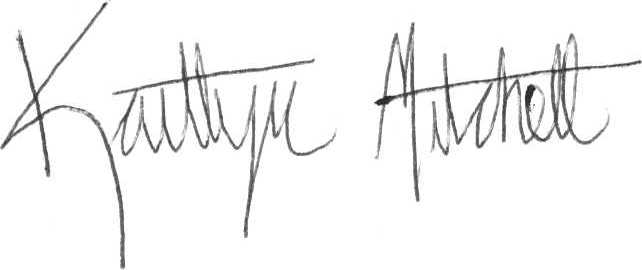
After the flight was delayed by 2 hours, and well in advance of the horses’ ultimate departure from Winnipeg, this timing would have been known to those responsible for the shipment.

Travel is an especially difficult and stressful process for these draft horses[[1]](#footnote-1) – animals that are not trained or conditioned for transportation, and whose biology makes them ill-suited for transportation, causing them to be prone to dehydration, injury, and fatigue. Forcing them to endure a journey of approximately 32 hours without food, water, and rest would have almost certainly contributed to additional and unnecessary suffering. In its Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines, the National Farm Animal Care Council (“**NFACC**”) itself notes that transport can predispose horses to colic and respiratory diseases due to stress caused by changes in surroundings, physical constraint, and deprivation of feed and water.

In addition to violating s 152.2(1)(c) of the Regulations, we ask you to take enforcement action to uphold s 138.2, which requires any person who transports animals for financial benefit to have a continency plan that establishes measures that are to be taken to comply with the regulatory requirements for transport if there are unforeseen delays that could result in horses’ unnecessary suffering, injury, or death. CFIA officials have previously indicated that Carolyle Farms (the company which we understand to have been responsible for this shipment) has not provided the Agency with a contingency plan for the duration of the journey for horses shipped to Japan. Rather, the Agency has been given a generic contingency plan covering ground transportation to the airport only. The owner of that company has publicly stated that it does not have a written contingency plan for the journey from Swan River to Japan.[[2]](#footnote-2) A lack of a legally mandated contingency plan to ensure all regulatory requirements are met is important to protect horses from needless suffering caused by delays in transport.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this serious matter.

Yours truly,



Kaitlyn Mitchell

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On behalf of: Animal Justice, the Winnipeg Humane Society, Canadian Horse Defence Coalition, and Manitoba Animal Save

1. See, e.g. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2020.00202/full>; <https://cdnsciencepub.com/doi/full/10.4141/cjas-2015-031>; <https://thehorse.com/1106496/expert-transport-is-an-equine-welfare-issue/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.manitobacooperator.ca/news-opinion/news/animal-rights-group-pursues-charge-against-swan-river-horse-farmer/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)