




What do ear lesions indicate?

- The aetiology and risk factors for ear lesions can be many.
- They can involve abnormal behaviour like biting, bacterial infections and can result in infections of the skin, underlying tissue and bones, and become necrotic with infection.
- During transport, severe ear lesions may further deteriorate due to biting by other pigs. Pigs with severe lesions are not fit for transport. 

Legal requirements

Council Regulation (EC) **1/2005**: Requirements associated with wounds:

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 1.}: only fit animals shall be transported.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 2.b}: unfit animals present severe open wounds, or prolapse.


{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 3.a}: no additional suffering for slightly injured or ill animals.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 3.b}: transportation of animals used for scientific purposes.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 3.c}: transportation under veterinary supervision for treatment or diagnosis.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 3.d}: transportation after veterinary procedures in relation to farming practices with completely healed wounds.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 4.}: separation, veterinary treatment and/or killing of animals falling ill or being injured during transport.

{Annex I, Chapter I, Point 5.}: use of sedatives. 

Note: Listed requirements are paraphrasing the literal text of the regulation and are not comprehensive. Moreover, there might be stricter national legislation in place. For a more detailed description on the specific requirements, see the review "[Fitness for Transport](#)".

Inspection method (recommended)

- In case the planned journey is less than 8h, farmer and livestock driver have to assess fitness for transport before and during loading.
- In case the journey is more than 8 h, an official inspector has to be present at loading to assess fitness for transport of pigs.
- In either case, pigs will be assessed for **ear lesions**.
- The inspector reports findings to the farmer and/or livestock driver, and in case of discrepancies between legal requirements and situation during loading and transport corrective actions are taken to ensure the situation complies with legal requirements in the future.

Assessment – In general

The assessor must make a judgment on the likelihood of the wounds to cause pain and blood loss during transport, as well as possible further aggravation. To decide on fitness for transport, she or he will have to consider: Whether the wound is large, extensive or/and severe; Whether the wounds are multiple; Whether the wound is healed or not (see next page).



Pigs are assessed individually according to the proportion of damage to the ears.

No or low risk to welfare

- No evidence of lesions or only healed or superficial lesions (wounds/ scratches)
- Smaller elephantiasis (see below)
- Curled ears after healed accumulation of blood ('blood-ear'*)

*also known as otohematomas



Moderate risk to welfare

- Fresh wounds on a smaller part of the ear.
- Elephantiasis – ear covers the eye or is so heavy that the head is somewhat tilted.
- Healing 'blood-ear', feels solid when touched



High risk to welfare

- Wounds involving a large part of the ear.
- Exposed ear cartilage.
- Inflammation/ infection deeper in the ear.
- Severe elephantiasis - the ear is so large/heavy that it limits the pig from moving normally, or from maintaining balance due to the titled head.
- Acute accumulation of blood ('blood-ear').



Sources for the assessment method: Transport-guide – assessment of fitness for transport and transport-related injuries (in Danish), Fødevarestyrelsen (2019) and from Practical Guidelines to Assess Fitness for Transport of Pigs



EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare *Pigs*

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding this factsheet please contact info.pigs@eurcaw.eu