

Indicator factsheet – Fitness for transport

Ear lesions

Pathological processes



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 deteriorate due to biting from other pigs, and the pigs 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 as part of a research programme.

{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 inspector additionally has to be present at loading to assess fitness for transport of pigs.
- In any case, pigs will be assessed for **ear lesions**.
- 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.

Scoring – In general

The assessor must consider the potential of the wounds to cause pain and blood loss during transport and possible aggravation. To make a decision, 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 scoring method next page*)

In case the wound is serious, open or bleeding, the animal is unfit for transport. Pigs are scored individually according to the proportion of damage to the ears.

Score 0

Fit for transport

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

*also known as otohematomas



Score 1

Fit for transport under conditions*

- 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



- Under conditions**:**
- Pig to be isolated.
 - Pig tagged with a coloured mark.
 - FCI (Food Chain Information) to be completed.
 - Transport not to cause unnecessary pain or suffering.
 - The animal to be loaded last.

Score 2

Unfit for transport

- 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').



Source scoring method: adapted and summarized from 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



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For any questions or suggestions regarding this factsheet please contact info.pigs@eurcaw.eu