

To the European Commission

To the Bulgarian Safety Authority

To the Ministry of Agriculture in Turkey

To the Romanian Food Safety Authority

To the World Organisation for Animal Health

Frankfurt, 28.10.2024

OBJECT: URGENT ACTION NEEDED FOR 47 HEIFERS DETAINED IN A TRUCK AT THE BULGARIAN-TURKISH BORDER¹

Animal Welfare Foundation and Animals' Angels demand urgent action to the competent authorities of Turkey, Bulgaria and to the European Commission for the 47 Romanian heifers detained in the buffer area of the Bulgarian-Turkish border since 18.10.2024.

The Turkish authorities refused to import the animals because they came from the Romanian region of Constanta, which is affected by Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR). The competent Bulgarian authorities refused the re-import and transit for the return of the animals to their place of origin in Romania.

Because of this impasse, the animals have been held in the lorry for 11 days, amidst their faeces. Some have died. Although food and water are provided, these are limited as space is, being the truck an unsuitable environment for animals to live in for days.

The Turkish authorities have informed the importer to implement one of the measures stipulated in Article 34 of Law No. 5996 also known as the 'Veterinary Services, Plant Health, Food and Feed Law,' i.e. either re-export, quarantine, special treatment, use for other purposes or destruction/killing. On 25.10.2024, the Turkish authorities issued a decision to kill the heifers 'because of the potential risk of spreading the disease' of PPR and because they endanger the environment, human and animal health and because the health and welfare conditions of the animals are not appropriate.

The re-importation into the EU of a rejected animal transport from a third country is possible under certain conditions².

¹ Kapitan Andreevo (BG)-Kapikule (TR)

² Regulation EU 2017/625 on official controls, article 66

This is not the first incident leading to the blocking of animal transports at the Bulgarian-Turkish border. The latest case dates back to just a fortnight ago, when 69 pregnant heifers died in excruciating pain inside two lorries, at a slaughterhouse in Turkey, after yet another destruction order and also at the dump where the last animals were unloaded.

The irremovability of the involved authorities in front of the immense suffering of living beings can no longer be tolerated and must stop.

It is time for the Turkish and Bulgarian authorities and for the European Commission to find a solution for these 47 heifers and to prevent further incidents where animals die of starvation in inhuman conditions due to the inertia and indifference of all the responsible authorities involved.

In the light of the above, we URGENTLY ask the European Commission and Woah to IMMEDIATELY ACT and ASSIST the competent authorities of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey to unblock this situation by unloading the animals in a stable TODAY.

According to the science, a real danger of spreading PPR is not realistic³. The Peste des Petits Ruminants is a virus that affects small ruminants and not cattle or other animal species and that cattle, in mixed environments, can come into contact with the virus without developing the disease, they do not become carriers or transmitters of the virus and do not spread the disease to other species. Sheep are the only natural hosts for virus replication.

We URGENTLY ask the Bulgarian competent authorities to immediately act and ALLOW⁴/RE-IMPORT THE TRANSPORT WITH THE 47 ROMANIAN HEIFERS INTO BULGARIA or ROMANIA, on the base of Reg. EU No. 2017/625, article 66, par. 1 and 3(c) and complying the requirements of Reg. EC No. 1/2005.

In case for some reason the necessary health certificates, already accompanying the animals, are not appropriate or sufficient anymore, they should be requested to the Romanian competent authorities as corrective measures. In the meanwhile, the Bulgarian competent authorities shall isolate and quarantine the animals, caring and treating them under appropriate conditions, sparing pain, distress or suffering, until the missing documents and certificates are provided.

We URGENTLY ask the Turkish competent authorities to immediately CANCEL THE CULLING ORDER Number E-35216929-325.13-16426469 of 25.10.2024 and either return the animals to the EU, either allow the animals to be transported to their intended destination in Bursa, in

Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations.

³ Munir, M. (2014). Peste des petits ruminants virus. Springer. This book provides a comprehensive overview of the biology of the virus and its specificity for small ruminants, excluding cattle and other species.

Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut (2019). Experimental studies conducted at the institute confirmed that cattle serve as 'final hosts' for PPR, not contributing to its spread.

FAO and OIE (2020) PPR Global Eradication Programme reports guidelines and confirms that the virus only affects sheep and goats.

FAO/WOAH - PPR Global Eradication Programme (PPR-GEP) aims to eradicate PPR by 2030, outlining specific strategies to prevent the spread among sheep and goats and reduce the risk to other vulnerable species, but not including cattle.

FAO and WOAH (2021) - Guidelines for the Control and Prevention of PPR in Wildlife Populations provide a strategic framework for the control of the virus in wildlife and small ruminants, with reference to the safety of other non-susceptible species such as cattle.

WOAH PPR Disease Card confirms the non-susceptibility of cattle to the virus.

Jones, B.A., et al. (2016). 'The economic impact of eradicating peste des petits ruminants: A benefit-cost analysis.'

⁴ The transport did not formally exit the EU territory, being in the buffer area of the border and not yet allowed to enter the Turkish customs.

Turkey and there to be kept in quarantine in compliance with the Turkish law No. 5996, article 34.

Yours faithfully,

Animal Welfare Foundation

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Iris Baingertner".

Animals' Angels

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Silke".