European Parliament
2014-2019

Plenary sitting

A8-0014/2017

1.2.2017

REPORT

on responsible ownership and care of equidae
(2016/2078(INI))

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Rapporteur: Julie Girling

CONTENTS

Page

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION 3

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT 14

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE 20

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on responsible ownership and care of equidae
(2016/2078(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Articles 39, 42 and 43 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) on the functioning of the common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy,

– having regard to Article 114 TFEU on the establishment and functioning of the single market,

– having regard to Protocol No 2 to the TFEU on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,

– having regard to Article 168(4)(b) TFEU on measures in the veterinary and phytosanitary fields which have the protection of public health as their direct objective,

– having regard to Article 13 TFEU, which lays down that, in formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies, the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage,

– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law')[1],

– having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97[2],

– having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing[3],

– having regard to Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998 concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes[4],

– having regard to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/262 of 17 February 2015 laying down rules pursuant to Council Directives 90/427/EEC and 2009/156/EC

[1] OJ L 84, 31.3.2016, p. 1.
[2] OJ L 3, 5.1.2005, p. 1.
[3] OJ L 303, 18.11.2009, p. 1.
[4] OJ L 221, 8.8.1998, p. 23.

as regards the methods for the identification of equidae ('Equine Passport Regulation')[1],

– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2016/1012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2016 on zootechnical and genealogical conditions for the breeding, trade in and entry into the Union of purebred breeding animals, hybrid breeding pigs and the germinal products thereof and amending Regulation (EU) No 652/2014 and Council Directives 89/608/EEC and 90/425/EEC and repealing certain acts in the area of animal breeding ('Animal Breeding Regulation'),

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005[2],

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 352/78, (EC) No 165/94, (EC) No 2799/98, (EC) No 814/2000, (EC) No 1290/2005 and (EC) No 485/2008[3],

– having regard to the judgment in case C-424/13, *Zuchtvieh-Export GmbH* v *Stadt Kempten*, of the Court of Justice of the European Union of 23 April 2015,

– having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'Europe 2020 – a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2010)2020),

– having regard to Commission Implementing Regulation 1337/2013 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 on the indication of the country of origin or place of provenance of the meat,

– having regard to the Commission communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled 'Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe' (COM(2010)0352),

– having regard to the conclusions of the Commission's EDUCAWEL study[4],

– having regard to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,

– having regard to the European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes,

– having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A8-0014/2017),

[1] OJ L 59, 3.3.2015, p. 1.
[2] OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 487.
[3] OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 549.
[4] See http://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/docs/aw_eu-strategy_study_edu-info-activ.pdf, accessed on 6.9.2016.

A. whereas the equid sector within the EU is worth over EUR 100 billion per annum[1] and accounted for an additional total turnover of EUR 27.3 billion in betting in 2013 alone, with EUR 1.1 billion received by Member State governments[2] ;

B. whereas approximately 900 000 jobs are created solely by the equestrian sports industry, five to seven equidae create one full-time job, and those jobs, which are not relocatable, are in what are now economically vulnerable rural areas;

C. whereas the equid sector meets the objectives of EU rural development policy, which is based on agricultural viability, sustainable natural-resource management and the promotion of social inclusion in rural communities; whereas equidae are still very much used within agriculture, with new uses being found, such as the production of donkey milk, as well as new opportunities and benefits for further developing these products for producers and consumers;

D. whereas the equid sector is playing an active role in meeting the Europe 2020 strategy's objective of bringing about sustainable growth based on both a greener economy and inclusive growth, and whereas the equid sector is important due to its vital contribution to environmental, economic and social development in rural areas;

E. whereas the European Union is the largest market for the equestrian sports industry globally[3];

F. whereas the estimated 7 million equidae in the EU perform hugely varied roles, with an age-old relationship with mankind, from competition and recreational animals to working animals in transport, tourism, behavioural, rehabilitation and education therapies, sports, education, forestry and agriculture, sources of milk and meat, research animals, and wild and semi-feral animals; whereas these equidae also help maintain biodiversity and rural sustainability and may perform several of these roles during their lives;

G. whereas responsible ownership and care of equidae starts with proper attention to animal health and welfare conditions, and whereas welfare issues must accordingly be central to all equidae activities; whereas the regulatory environment at EU level varies among Member States, and whereas existing legislation is implemented differently within the EU, which leads to distortion of competition and a deterioration in animal welfare;

H. whereas equidae are the most transported animals in Europe in proportion to their population[4], and whereas animal transport times are a serious concern for EU citizens, who demand shorter transport times, as equidae are sometimes transported in and from the EU in vehicles unsuitable for carrying equidae over long distances by road, sea and air before they reach their final destination;

I. whereas the data on the movements of equidae for commercial purposes are recorded

[1] Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), FAQs on High Health, High Performance Horse (HHP) Concept adopted at the May 2014 OIE General Session.
[2] Annual Report of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities.
[3] FEI database, accessed on 22.9.2014.
[4] TRACES database 2012.

via the Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES), but this data is only released annually and with a two-year delay;

J. whereas readily available data could help competent authorities and other organisations to better monitor animal health effects and to investigate subsequent indications of poor biosecurity;

K. whereas there is insufficient data available to directly quantify how many working equidae are used on small and semi-subsistence farms, many of which are found in the newer Member States, and in tourism;

L. whereas the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) adopted guidelines concerning working equidae in May 2016[1] as regards observing animals' five fundamental freedoms, i.e. freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition, from fear and distress, from physical discomfort and heat stress, from pain and to express (most) normal behaviour;

M. whereas equidae provide valuable employment and revenue to localities and rural areas from agriculture, equestrian activities and tourism that cannot be relocated, but the welfare of some equidae is compromised and tourists are too often insufficiently informed to identify welfare issues and correct the problem[2];

N. whereas welfare labels introduced by the industry can help ensure that activities are carried out properly and that the public is given the necessary information;

O. whereas unlimited, indiscriminate and irresponsible breeding of equidae can lead to animals that are devoid of economic value and are often left with serious welfare problems, particularly during an economic downturn; whereas Parliament and the Council recently adopted legislation harmonising the rules on zootechnical and genealogical conditions for the breeding of purebred breeding animals, including equidae, the objectives being to make the EU breeding sector more competitive and better organised and to improve available information on purebred breeding and on purebred breeding animals, in particular equidae;

P. whereas equid abandonment has increased since 2008 in western Member States, especially where these equidae have become expensive luxuries, constituting a major financial burden rather than a source of income; whereas there has been no adequate and satisfactory response to this problem from the Commission and the Member States;

Q. whereas most instances of this behaviour can be assigned to private owners and are not representative for the most part of the professional horse sector in Europe;

R. whereas equidae are social animals with cognitive abilities and strong affiliative ties, and whereas they are used in a range of educational and training programmes as well as therapy and rehabilitation programmes, including in cases of autistic spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, cerebrovascular accident, learning or language disabilities and difficulties, offender rehabilitation, psychotherapy, post-traumatic stress disorder and

[1] World Organisation for Animal Health – Terrestrial Animal Health Code (2016), Chapter 7.12.
[2] Santorini Donkey and Mule Taxis – an Independent Animal Welfare Report for the Donkey Sanctuary, 2013.

addiction;

S. whereas owners are faced with difficult decisions when they are no longer able to sufficiently care for their equidae, in part due to high veterinary costs, and whereas in some Member States euthanasia is too often the first recourse, and a costly one, for owners who are no longer able to bear the cost of veterinary care and the cost of ensuring the equid's welfare needs; whereas in other Member States equidae can only be euthanised where there is a clear immediate veterinary need, irrespective of the long-term welfare of the animal concerned;

T. whereas equidae are not considered to be food-producing animals in many countries outside the Union, and whereas equine meat is routinely imported from these countries to be sold and placed on the EU market; whereas this situation gives rise to welfare issues and distortions of competition because, for the time being, the EU does not allow meat from European horses not originally intended for meat production and slaughter to enter the human food chain, while more flexibility is allowed for meat imported from third countries;

1. Recognises the considerable economic, environmental and social contribution equidae make throughout the EU and the essential cultural and educational values directly related thereto, such as respect for animals and for the environment;

2. Points out that equidae are increasingly being used for educational, sporting, therapeutic and recreational purposes on agricultural holdings by farmers seeking to diversify their activities and broaden their income base, and stresses that the presence of equidae facilitates multi-functionality for a farming business, which is conducive to boosting employment in rural areas and contributes to the development of urban-rural relations, local sustainability and cohesion;

3. Calls for greater EU-level acknowledgement of the equid sector, and its benefits for the rural economy, which makes a significant contribution to the EU's general and strategic objectives, and for it to be incorporated to a greater extent into the various CAP components, including direct aid under the first pillar or under the second pillar;

4. Notes that good equid health and welfare boosts the economic output of farms and businesses alike and benefits the rural economy overall, while also accommodating the growing demand of EU citizens for higher animal health and welfare standards;

5. Calls on the Commission to recognise the status of working animals for equidae as an important tool in agricultural activities in rural areas of Europe, especially in mountainous and hard-to-reach areas;

6. Stresses that equid owners should have a minimum level of knowledge of equid husbandry, and that with ownership comes a personal responsibility for the standard of health and welfare of the animals in their care;

7. Highlights that knowledge exchange between equidae owners, but also between Member States, should be an important tool for meeting these needs, and notes that alongside the emergence of new scientific knowledge, legislative developments and learning methods, equid professionals have improved their working methods in such a

way as to enhance equid welfare;

8. Notes that most equid owners and handlers behave responsibly; highlights that the increased promotion of animal welfare has the best opportunity to succeed within the framework of economically viable production systems;

9. Notes that the professionals need to remain economically viable while responding effectively to new challenges such as limited natural resources, the effects of climate change and the emergence and spread of new diseases;

10. Encourages the Member States to create an environment in which on-farm businesses are viable;

11. Underlines, with reference to the 10 OIE principles, the importance of the forthcoming Animal Welfare Reference Centres for improved levels of full compliance with, and consistent enforcement of, legislation, along with the dissemination of information and best practice relating to animal welfare;

12. Calls on the Commission to commission a Eurostat study to analyse the economic, environmental and social impact of all aspects of the equid sector and to supply statistical data on a regular basis on the use of services, transport and slaughter of equidae;

13. Calls on the Commission to develop European Guidelines on Good Practice in the Equid Sector for various users and specialists, drawn up in consultation with stakeholders and organisations from the equid sector and based on existing guides, including a focus on species-specific welfare and behavioural care, in addition to end-of-life care;

14. Calls on the Commission to ensure equal application of the EU Guidelines and to release resources for translation of this document;

15. Calls on the Commission to encourage and collect exchanges of good practices and educational programmes of different Member States in terms of animal welfare and to support the production and dissemination of this information on how to meet the needs of equidae, irrespective of their role, based on the ‘five freedoms’ and covering the entirety of an equid’s life;

16. Calls on the Commission, when setting up its European Guidelines on Good Practice in the Equid Sector, to consider the multifunctional role of equidae by including guidance on responsible breeding, animal health and welfare and the benefits of equid sterilisation, work in tourism, agriculture and forestry, species-appropriate transport and slaughter and protection against fraudulent practices, including doping, and recommends that such guidance be disseminated, in collaboration with EU-recognised representative professional agricultural organisations, to breeders, equid societies, farms, stables, sanctuaries, transporters and slaughterhouses, and that it be accessible in a variety of formats and languages;

17. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support the work of the European Horse Network and the European State Stud Association, as they play an important role in the development of the European horse sector by serving as a platform to exchange

best practices and by preserving traditions, skills, old horse breeds and the impact of the sector;

18. Urges the Commission to expand its educational resources on farm welfare, directed both at specialists in direct contact with equidae, such as veterinary surgeons, animal breeders and horse owners, and at a broader circle of users, in order to encompass equid welfare and breeding, while stressing the importance of training and information, via the Farm Advisory System;

19. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to also utilise knowledge-transfer schemes to share good practices and business models, to raise awareness of any issues and to foster innovation and new ideas; notes that in some Member States knowledge-transfer schemes already exist in the equid sector;

20. Calls on the Commission to recommit to the development of a European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism, with the dissemination of clear information to help tourists and stakeholders make welfare-friendly choices when deciding whether or not to use the services of working equidae; stresses that this charter should be based on existing quality charters that have been established by recognised, representative and professional agricultural organisations, and notes that, while some Member States have strict guidelines for working conditions and hours, such protection is lacking in other Member States;

21. Calls on the Commission to issue guidance to Member States on welfare-friendly tourism models with regard to working equidae;

22. Urges the Member States to establish voluntary labour guidelines including daily working hours and rest periods to protect working equidae from overwork and economic exploitation;

23. Calls on the Commission to make data from TRACES available to the public far faster than at present;

24. Stresses that existing EU legislation on the protection of animals during transport and related operations is designed to protect animals from injury and suffering, and to ensure that animals are transported in compliance with appropriate conditions and time periods, and is concerned at deficiencies in the enforcement of EU animal welfare transport legislation by many Member States' authorities;

25. Calls on the Commission to ensure the proper application and effective and uniform enforcement of existing EU legislation on animal transport and legally binding reporting across all Member States;

26. Calls on Member States exporting equidae to find ways of encouraging slaughter within their territory so as to avoid, where possible, the transport of live equidae, and calls on the Commission to establish a mechanism for effective monitoring of compliance with the legislative and regulatory provisions under both the future and current legal framework;

27. Requests that the Commission propose a shortened maximum journey limit for all

movements of horses for slaughter, based on the findings of the European Food Safety Authority and on the transport guides for equidae produced by industry professionals, taking into account the specific characteristics of different countries' equine industries;

28. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to formulate guidance and to facilitate and enhance scientific research and implement existing research on the welfare of equidae at the time of slaughter in order to develop humane methods of slaughter better suited to equidae, and to disseminate these guidance documents to the competent authorities of the Member States;

29. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to fully and properly commit to inspections and to conduct regular audits of the slaughterhouses on their territory that are licensed to take equidae, to ensure that they are able to meet the specific welfare needs of equidae, particularly in terms of facilities and qualification of staff;

30. Calls on the Commission to commit to developing validated animal welfare indicators, which should be used to assess the welfare of equidae, to identify existing problems and to help drive improvements, while ensuring practical implementation and benefits for the sector, and considers it important to include stakeholders who have implemented similar tools across the EU, and to work in close cooperation with representatives of professional organisations from the equid sector in the process of setting up animal welfare indicators;

31. Urges the Commission and the Member States to encourage horse owners to form associations;

32. Stresses the importance of the humane treatment and welfare of equidae, and the principle that any cruel, abusive treatment by any owner, trainer, groom or other person must not be tolerated anywhere, under any circumstances;

33. Calls on the Member States to apply stricter legislation regarding the mistreatment and abandonment of animals, including extraordinary measures to combat abandonment, and to fully and properly investigate reports of inhumane practices and welfare violations vis-à-vis equidae;

34. Notes that differences exist between equid species and such differences alter welfare needs, including those relating to end-of-life care and slaughter requirements;

35. Calls on the Commission to undertake a study and to document these differences and issue species-specific guidelines to ensure that welfare standards are maintained;

36. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support research and development on species-appropriate husbandry systems in the equid sector, taking into consideration the natural behaviour of equidae as herd animals with a tendency to flee;

37 Calls on the Commission to prioritise a pilot project to examine the use of new and existing funding schemes to reward good welfare outcomes for working equidae, including those on small and semi-subsistence farms;

38. Calls on the Member States to ensure that Commission Implementing Regulation (EU)

2015/262 (‘Equine Passport Regulation’) is fully and properly implemented;

39. Notes that the price of veterinary medicines, the cost of carcass disposal and the cost of euthanasia, where permitted, can serve as a barrier in themselves to the ending of an equid’s life, leading to prolonged suffering;

40. Calls on the Member States to investigate reports of inhumane practices during euthanasia and welfare violations such as the improper use of drugs and to report violations to the Commission;

41. Recognises the growth of donkey and horse milk production, and calls on the Commission to issue guidance on donkey and horse milk farming;

42. Calls on the Member States, in cooperation with professional, representative and recognised agricultural organisations, to commit to increasing the number of inspections on donkey and horse milk farms;

43. Expresses serious concern about the import and use of veterinary medicinal products containing Pregnant Mare Serum Gonadotropin (PMSG);

44. Calls on the Commission's Directorate for Health and Food Audits and Analysis to inspect certified PMSG hormone producers, by means of audits, for compliance with animal welfare provisions during production and to investigate and produce a report on the welfare and treatment of mares used for the collection of hormones for use in the pharmaceutical industry;

45. Underlines that a fair fiscal system, adapted to the different needs of each Member State, that allows professional equid farmers to generate the necessary revenues to maintain economic activity in European equestrian farms, is not yet in place;

46. Notes that a fairer fiscal system for the equine sector would enable the sector to operate within a level-playing field, increase the transparency of equid-related activities and thereby combat fraud and address grey-economy issues and allow professional horse farmers to generate the necessary revenues to maintain their economic activity;

47. Takes the view that VAT law applying to the equine sector should be clarified during the forthcoming revision of the VAT Directive in order to foster the development of a growth- and jobs-oriented equine sector;

48. Calls on the Commission to take action to afford Member States greater flexibility in setting a reduced rate of VAT for all activities in the industry, and believes that such clarification should result in the establishment of a uniform, dependable and targeted framework for reduced VAT rates that will leave Member States sufficient leeway to frame their own tax policies;

49. Stresses the differences in health requirements applicable to horsemeat produced in Europe and that imported from third countries;

50. Recalls the need to establish effective traceability of horsemeat, and stresses that it is desirable to have an equivalent level of health and food safety requirements and

conformity of imports for the European consumer irrespective of the origin of horsemeat consumed;

51. Calls on the Commission, to take action to restore the balance between the level of requirements within the EU and that for which checks are carried out at borders, while protecting consumer health;

52. Calls on the Commission therefore to make indication of the country of origin mandatory for all processed horsemeat products;

53. Calls on the Commission to increase the number of audits conducted in slaughterhouses outside the Union which are authorised for the export of equine meat to the EU, and to conditionally suspend the import of equine meat produced in third countries that do not satisfy EU traceability and food safety requirements;

54. Stresses the need to lift the taboo on the end of life of equidae; considers that facilitating the end of life of a horse does not exclude its entry into the food chain;

55. Calls on the Commission to pay particular attention to end-of-life care for equidae, including the establishment of maximum residue levels (MRLs) for commonly used veterinary medicines such as Phenylbutazone, to guarantee safety in the food chain;

56. Calls on the Member States to promote the reintegration into the food chain, by means of a 'withdrawal period' system based on scientific research which will make it possible to bring an animal back into the food chain after a medicine has been administered to it for the last time, while protecting consumer health;

57. Notes that, for equidae that are not destined for the slaughterhouse to produce food for human consumption (registered as 'not for use in food production'), there is no record in some Member States of any medicines administered and it is possible that they might enter the illegal slaughter circuit and thus seriously endanger public health; calls on the Commission, therefore, to remedy this regulatory loophole;

58. Calls on the Commission to consider, together with the Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations (FEEVA), harmonising access to treatment and medication throughout the European territory;

59. Considers that such harmonisation would have the advantage of avoiding any distortions of competition and facilitating the wider treatment of equid diseases and more effectively relieving the suffering of equidae;

60. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote exchanges of good practices to facilitate rational use of medicines for equidae;

61. Notes that, while therapy and veterinary medicines are at times necessary and appropriate, more effort is needed to tackle the low levels of investment and the lack of medicines, including vaccines, available to treat equidae;

62. Draws attention moreover to the need to develop pharmaceutical research and innovation concerning the administration of medicines to equidae, as the sector severely

lacks medicines adapted to equid metabolisms;

63. Calls on the Commission to finance additional research into the possible effects of different medication on the lives of equidae;

64. Notes that some of the equine races bred in the Member States are local breeds forming part of the way of life and culture of certain communities, and that some Member States have included in their rural development programmes measures to protect and further distribute these breeds;

65. Calls on the Commission to commit itself to financial support programmes for the preservation and protection of native species of equidae in the wild or in danger of extinction in the EU;

66. Recognises the high ecological and natural value of populations of wild equidae, which contribute to clearing and fertilising the areas in which they live, along with the tourism-related value that wild horse populations offer, and calls for more research into the problems faced by these populations;

67. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The scale of the equid sector in the European Union

Equidae have a unique place in European history and civilisation. They are the most versatile of animals, not only providing milk and meat, they are also sporting athletes, companion animals, working animals in transport, tourism, forestry, agriculture and therapy, research animals, and wild and semi-feral animals too.

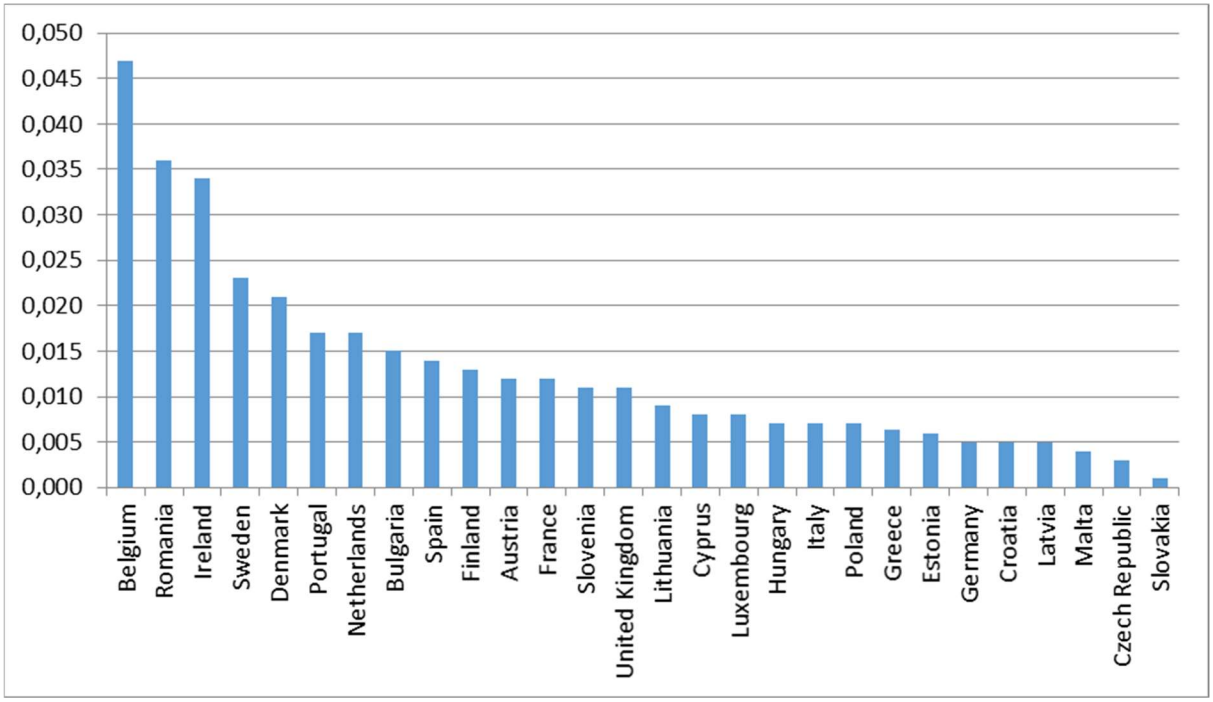

Figure 1: Per capita equid populations

According to Fédération Equestre Internationale, the equid sector is worth over € 100 billion per annum. The EU's estimated 7 million equidae use at least 2.6 million hectares of land[1] and at least 900,000[2] jobs are dependent solely on the equestrian sports industry across the EU.

It is clear that the equid sector can have a huge impact on local economies – particularly in rural areas. A report into the French equid sector also found high-levels of part-time female employment[3],.

In some Member States, equidae play a less easily quantifiable role in the local economy – that of working animals on small and semi-subsistence farms (SSFs), and in tourism. No data exists to accurately quantify the numbers of animals used on SSFs, however there are a

[1] See http://faostat3.fao.org/browse/Q/QA/E, accessed 11.02.15

[2] Presentation to the European Equestrian Federation General Assembly by Ali Küçük (EEF Secretary General), 21 October 2014

[3] Advances in Animal Biosciences, October 2013. The French Horse Industry: Scenarios 20130 Cambridge University Press (2013), p55

reported 600,000 – 800,000 equidae present in Romania, around 80% of which are used for working activities, such as for the transportation of goods and people, and for agriculture and forestry work[1].

The equid sports and leisure market in Europe is the largest in the world. 21% of global Thoroughbreds were produced within the 28 Member States. 93% of the world's jump races in 2013 taking place within the Union, along with 21,000 flat races in 2013 and over 43,000 trotting races. In addition the majority of FEI events (such as jumping, dressage, eventing and para-dressage) were held in the EU in 2014.

The equid sector also provides opportunities for entrepreneurs across Europe, and for those in rural areas in particular. For example, donkey milk farming is a traditional practice in parts of Italy, and farms also operate in Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Cyprus and Romania. Indeed donkey milk is believed to be beneficial to its drinkers in a number of ways, and is seen as the best substitute for human milk[2] for infants and sick children. Whilst the price of donkey milk fluctuates, it generally retails between € 8 to € 15 per litre.

Likewise, equidae are widely used in therapy and rehabilitation, and provide further economic opportunities and societal benefits in doing so. Hippotherapy is used by the Riding for the Disabled Association and The Donkey Sanctuary in the UK to assist people with a range of conditions, including autistic spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, cerebral vascular incident and learning of language disabilities[3]. Across Europe, 21 Member States have one or more organisations or individuals which are members of the Federation of Horses in Education and Therapy International AISBL (HETI)[4].

The EU's equidae also provide a source of meat and, to a lesser extent, equid leather. The number of animals slaughtered is difficult to ascertain, as it varies from year to year. Many Member States showed an increase in slaughtering from 2011 – 2012, with figures falling again in 2013.

Welfare concerns and their causes adversely impacting on the equid sector

Research undertaken by World Horse Welfare and Eurogroup for Animals in the report *Removing the Blinkers: The Health and Welfare of European Equidae in 2015*, shows that despite the breadth of the sector, the welfare problems facing Europe's 7 million equidae are remarkably similar.

The treatment of working equidae is a particular cause of concern in a number of Member States, especially where there are large equid populations, and where they are used on SSFs. As many of these equidae can live on easily available foodstuffs, such as grass and hay, they

[1] Popescu, S. Duigan, E-A. 2012. The relationship between behavioural and other welfare indicators of working horses. Journal of Equine Veterinary Science 33, 1-12

[2] http://www.foodsmatter.com/allergy_intollerance/goat_sheep_milks/research/mares_milk.html accessed 20.08.14

[3] http://www.rda.org.uk/assets/understanding-hippotherapy7.pdf accessed 02.09.14

[4] http://www.frdi.net/membership_list.html accessed 02.09.14

may be perceived as needing little in the way of specialist attention. However, welfare problems caused by inexpert amateur farriery or unsuitable harnesses do not simply cause distress and suffering to the individual equid, but also compromise the ability of the animal to work efficiently and its longevity, thus also negatively impacting upon the farm or the business.

Many of the same problems are found where equidae are used in tourism. In some instances, the welfare of the equid is seriously compromised by their work, which consequently impacts upon the efficient functioning of the enterprise. Although these animals are often working in plain sight, they may continue to suffer welfare problems if tourists are unable to identify potential welfare problems.

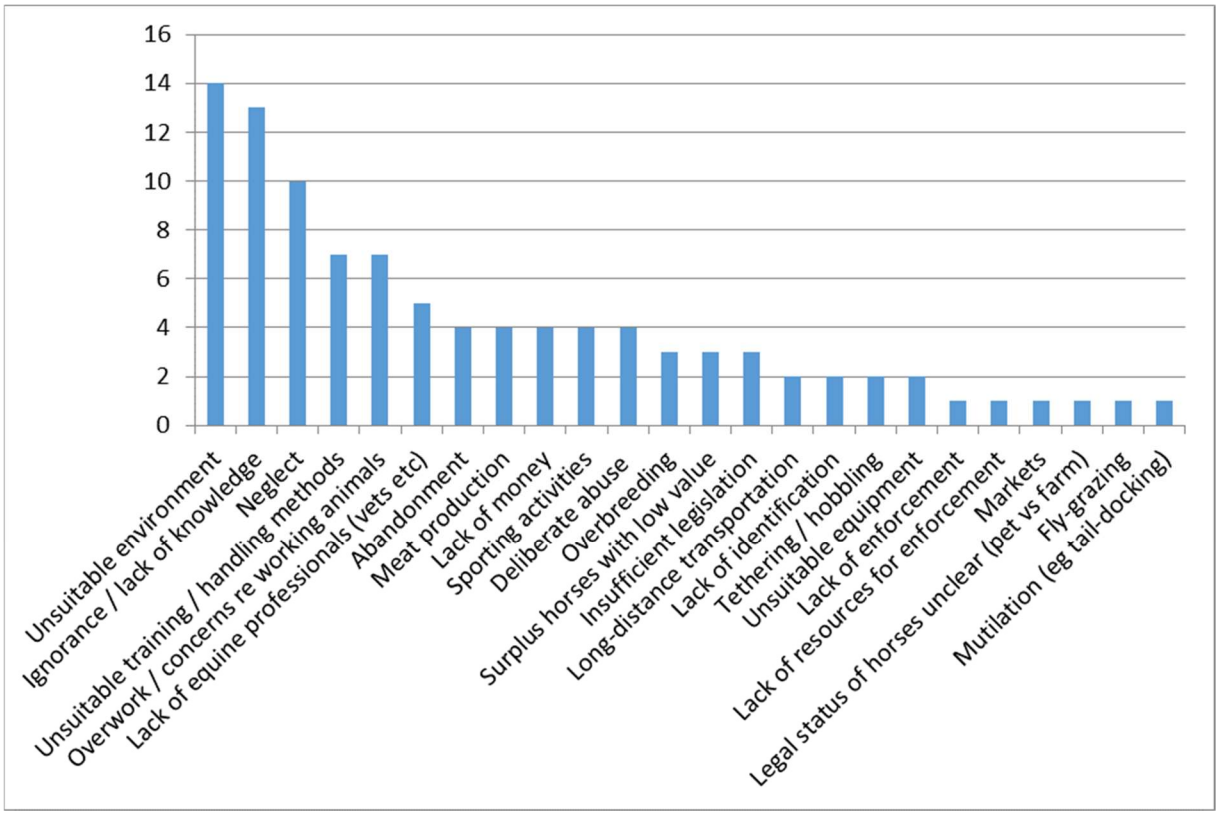

Figure 2: Prevalent welfare problems as reported by NGOs in *Removing the Blinkers: The Health & Welfare of Equidae in 2015*

In the equid sport sector, Europe's breeders are often to be found at the forefront of the world. European studbooks lead the World Breeding Federation for Sports Horses (WBFSH) classifications for eventing, jumping and dressage. However, unlimited equid breeding may cause serious welfare problems. Equidae can quickly become the victims of economic misfortunes. High demand for equidae during times of high economic prosperity may lead to indiscriminate breeding of less high-quality animals. In downturns, these animals lose much of what value they had and may become entirely worthless in a financial sense. It is no surprise that many Member States, particular in the west of the Union, have seen a dramatic rise in equid abandonment in recent years[1].

[1]RSCPA, World Horse Welfare, Redwings, the British Horse Society, Blue Cross & Horse World: Left on the verge: in the grip of an equine crisis in England and Wales, 2013

The cost of keeping equidae varies greatly depending on the Member State and region in question, the purpose of the animal and the method of keeping. However, with few options for rehoming, and in times of a contracted market for the sale of the equid, some owners choose to send their animals to slaughter, or euthanise their animals, if this is affordable and legally available. Sadly, it is clear that those who take responsibility for an equid are not always aware of the costs and time commitment involved in taking care for such an animal, particularly when, during times of oversupply, purchase prices have fallen to as low as € 5 per animal[1].

Given their multifarious roles, it is little surprise that equidae are the most transported animals within the EU, as a proportion of their overall population[2]. Whilst these movements are captured by the Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES), data is currently released annually, with a two-year delay. This delay impedes Competent Authorities and other organisations to see how the movement of equidae is affected by external factors and affects other areas in turn. For example, the movement of equidae for slaughter may be linked to an increase in the incidence of notifiable diseases[3] in the population of non-slaughter equidae – perhaps therefore indicating that biosecurity standards are poor.

Equidae for slaughter also move frequently between Member States, and are also exported to third countries (notably to Russia), in conditions which often compromise their welfare[4]. They are particularly vulnerable as there is little incentive for transporters to ensure the welfare of these animals during transit.

Where equidae are used for purely farming purposes, it is important that animal health and welfare remain priorities. Consumers must remain protected, and should know that equid-derived products, such as donkey milk, are safe. Indeed, welfare on farms where donkey milk is produced varies greatly[5]. On some farms milking is still undertaken by hand, whilst in others milking machines are in place. In addition, levels of surveillance are in no way comparable to those of cows' milk farms, although this may be due to the fact that fewer human pathogens are found in donkey milk[6]. Furthermore, whilst the legal standards applying to equid milk are unclear and inspections and supervision inconsistent across the EU.

Recommendations to unlock the economic potential of the equid sector, and to advance good equid health & welfare

Whilst the full size and scale of the equid sector is not completely clear, it is apparent that it has a disproportionately large economic impact upon the economy given the relatively small

[1] DSPCA: 'Ireland's Horse Crisis', http://www.dspca.ie/equinecrisis

[2] TRACES data

[3] The Donkey Sanctuary & University College Dublin: Donkey Welfare in Ireland in 2015 (Chapter 5, pages 55 - 71)

[4] World Horse Welfare, 2008, Dossier of Evidence: Recommendations for amendments to EU Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 and World Horse Welfare Dossier of Evidence, Second Edition, Part 1: Journey Times

[5] The Donkey Sanctuary, personal communication

[6] Keith Meldrum CB BVM&S MRCVS DVSM Hon. FRSPH, personal communication

number of animals involved. However, it is clear that guidance and the sharing of best practice could drive bottom-up change and could do a lot to address problems that stem from mere ignorance.

For instance, a number of organisations have undertaken work to develop guides to the good practice for the transportation of equidae. Practical Guidelines on the Watering of Equine Animals Transported by Road were published in 2014, and new guidelines have recently been developed on equid fitness for transport. The Commission should actively support the development of such guides to good practice, not only to assist with levels of compliance and to ensure consistent enforcement, but fundamentally to ensure the proper care of these animals during long and short distance transport.

Likewise, many NGOs have produced guidance on meeting the basic needs of equidae from birth to the end of life. By way of an example, World Horse Welfare produced guidelines four years ago entitled 'Five ways to ensure a happy, healthy horse'. Such guidance, adapted to meet the needs of all equidae, translated, available in a variety of formats and promoted by the Commission, could do much to enhance the knowledge of equid owners and handlers alike, and would safeguard not only the health and welfare of the individual animals, but their long term economic value and output too.

The previous Commission began to develop a *European Charter for a Sustainable and Responsible Tourism*, which was foreseen as including information to assist tourists in making welfare-friendly choices when deciding whether not to use the services of working equidae. The Rapporteur urges the Commission to recommit to the idea of the charter, and to empower tourists to make choices which will not only reward those enterprises which properly care for their equidae, but which will also inform and provide peace of mind to the consumer in the process.

The handling requirements of equidae are quite different from many other species, and nowhere is this more apparent than at the time of slaughter. The Commission should explore the possibility of disseminating guidance to slaughterhouses which are licenced to take equidae. In turn, the FVO and the Competent Authorities should also increase the number of inspections on these premises.

Indeed the measuring of compliance with proper standards also helps to drive improvements. As such, the Commission should commit to the establishment of new Animal Welfare Reference Centres, and the development of validated Animal Welfare Indicators for equidae. These indicators should be used to encourage and rewarded farmers where possible, and the Commission should commit to investigating such possibilities through a new pilot project.

Finally, Member States should commit to increasing the number of inspections on donkey milk farms, particularly in lieu of a professional association for donkey farmers, and as many lack quality control standards. The Commission could also play a role here in disseminating guidance on donkey milk farming from expert institutes and NGOs.

Whilst responsible ownership and care should always be expected as a minimum, many of the health and welfare problems faced by Europe's equids today show that it is too often left by the wayside. However, the initiatives suggested here would increase awareness, information and incentives, and could help unlock the full economic potential of the equid sector in the

EU, whilst better protecting the welfare of these unique animals we value so much as a society.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	25.1.2017
Result of final vote	+: 43 –: 1 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	John Stuart Agnew, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Eric Andrieu, Richard Ashworth, Daniel Buda, Matt Carthy, Viorica Dăncilă, Michel Dantin, Jean-Paul Denanot, Albert Deß, Diane Dodds, Jørn Dohrmann, Herbert Dorfmann, Norbert Erdős, Luke Ming Flanagan, Martin Häusling, Anja Hazekamp, Esther Herranz García, Jan Huitema, Peter Jahr, Ivan Jakovčić, Jarosław Kalinowski, Elisabeth Köstinger, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Philippe Loiseau, Giulia Moi, Ulrike Müller, James Nicholson, Maria Noichl, Laurenţiu Rebega, Jens Rohde, Bronis Ropė, Czesław Adam Siekierski, Tibor Szanyi, Marc Tarabella, Marco Zullo
Substitutes present for the final vote	Franc Bogovič, Stefan Eck, Julie Girling, Karin Kadenbach, Norbert Lins, Florent Marcellesi, John Procter, Vladimir Urutchev
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Pilar Ayuso, Damiano Zoffoli