

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS
Green Party

for the South East of England

Commissioner Markos Kyprianou
DG - Health & Consumer Protection
The European Commission
B1049
Brussels
Belgium

June 23rd 2005

Dear Commissioner,

RE: Directive on the Welfare of Broiler Chickens

As I am sure you are aware, there is growing concern about the welfare of broiler chickens, particularly following a report in 2000 from the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare (SCAHAW). I am dismayed, therefore, that the Commission's new proposals for a Directive are far from adequate and do little to address the key concerns expressed by SCAHAW, and echoed by so many of my constituents.

The following areas are of particular concern:

Maximum stocking density

The recommended level of 30kg/m², with the option to increase to 38 kg/m² if certain environmental conditions are met, is significantly higher than the levels recommended by SCAHAW. Their 2000 report states 'above 30kg/m², even with very good environmental control systems, there is a steep rise in the frequency of serious welfare problems'. I would urge you to amend the maximum stocking density to 25kg/m² in line with SCAHAW's recommendations.

Genetic Selection

The cause of so many broiler chicken welfare problems is the preference given to fast growing breeds. The failure to address this problem directly is a serious flaw in the proposed Directive and I believe this must be reviewed immediately.

Lighting Levels

The proposed Directive sets out that buildings must have a lighting level of at least 20 lux. This should be amended to reflect good management practices in the welfare of animals, with a minimum lighting level of 20 lux for rearing sheds and with the aim of setting levels at 100 lux.

There are elements of the proposed legislation that are commendable, for example the minimum standards on training provision, and the Directive is an important first step. However, it does not go far enough. In response to a written question that I submitted in November 2002 on this matter, I was assured by the Commission that any proposed legislation would take into account the main recommendations made by SCAHAW and 'include specific provisions to address the questions related to the rapid growth rate of the animals'. The current proposals do not deliver on this assurance and I would urge you to review the specific points I have raised as a matter of urgency.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.