

Brussels, 19. 11. 2008
D(2008) 1760

Dear Dr. Lucas,

Thank you for your letter of 9 October 2008 in which you ask the Commission to present reports on certain aspects of pig welfare in order to review the specific European legislation in this area.

The Commission is aware of the need to upgrade the legislation taking into account new scientific evidence as presented in the reports adopted by the European Food Safety Authority. The Commission has already started the work to evaluate the best option to improve the current situation taking into account the need to consider the strategic priorities of the Community Action Plan for the Welfare of Animals and in particular the option to incorporate in its future proposal specific measurable animal welfare indicators, where available. There will still be a need for minimum standards regarding the farming system, housing conditions and feeding procedures, but the development of animal based welfare indicators will contribute to a better assessment of the animal welfare situation "on farm" and hopefully better enforcement of welfare standards.

In the light of the above the Commission is working to elaborate a proposal to revise the 1998¹ general legislation for the protection of animals kept for farming purposes as well as the specific requirements on pigs and calves. The new proposal will also consider the objectives of the new Animal Health Law, foreseen in the EU Animal Health Strategy².

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Dr Caroline Lucas, MEP
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz
B-1047 Brussels

¹ Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998 concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes. Official Journal L 221 , 08/08/1998 P. 0023 - 0027

² http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/strategy/index_en.htm

The Commission is aware that the development of international recognised animal welfare indicators is a complex and challenging task but once achieved it should allow better enforcement and the promotion of higher welfare standards. In addition it could allow the comparison of animal welfare standards with international trade partners and hopefully to facilitate their use beyond the borders of the Community. Several research projects are ongoing to support this initiative, including the Community funded research project called "Welfare Quality". The delivery of "Welfare Quality" is expected in 2009 and the future Swedish Presidency of the European Union has already announced its interest in the Commission initiatives in this area.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "O. Vanilov", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.