Loading and unloading of cattle
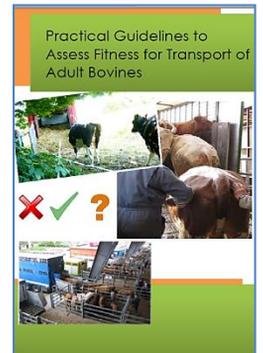
ANIMAL TRANSPORT GUIDES

For full guides and more information:
www.animaltransportguides.eu

✔ Preparation of loading: 'What to do?'

1 Driver to **check** *'Live Animal Transport Driver Checklist: Are You Prepared?'*. In case of any doubt or emergency situation, request veterinary advice

2 Check **number and fitness** of the cattle to load (size, weight and fitness for transport). For the fitness check, use '*Practical Guidelines to Assess Fitness of Adult Bovines*'

3 Prepare **a loading plan**, take into consideration how many cattle, weight, sex, presence of horns. Sexually mature cattle shall be handled separately and transported in separate compartments

4 Open **lateral shutters** of truck, for ventilation during loading

5 Driver/attendant to adjust the truck **loading ramp** to the quay. Avoid gaps and make slope as low as possible (max. 36% or 20° for calves, max. 50% or 26° for adult cattle)

6 If no loading quay is present, organize a **curved or angled loading** circuit (solid corridors, height for adults: 1,7 m) close to the vehicle

7 Spread **straw on loading zone** to avoid slipping and reflections

8 Check circuit for any visual or physical **obstacles**

9 Loading should be done **calmly and smoothly**

Practical Guidelines to Assess Fitness for Transport of Adult Bovines
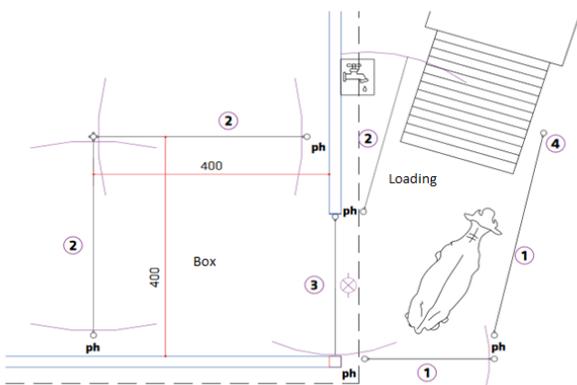
Ready to load!

All animals should be able to stand or lay down at the same time. Keep about 20 cm above the shoulder of cattle for optimum air flow

Space allowance

Categories	Mean weight	Min. surface / animal (m²)
Small calves	50	0.30 to 0.40
Medium sized calves	110	0.40 to 0.70
Heavy calves	200	0.70 to 0.95
Medium sized cattle	325	0.95 to 1.30
Heavy cattle	550	1.30 to 1.60
Very heavy cattle	>700	> 1.60

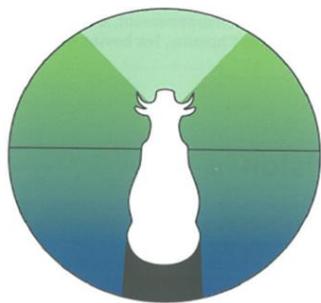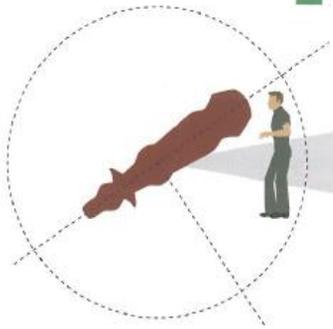ANIMAL TRANSPORT GUIDES

✓ Loading

1. Allow cattle to load at their **regular walking speed**
2. Handle cattle in **groups** (5 adult cattle, 10 – 15 calves)
3. **Limit noise** to minimize stress
4. Even better is to load **calves** with **individual help**
5. Have in mind the specific **vision** of cattle: position yourself half behind to make cattle move forward

Binocular vision Reduced vision
Monocular vision Blind zone

What to do if cattle stop and refuse to move,

- Noise should be limited. Avoid yelling /shouting; cattle are highly sensitive
- Let the cattle calm down and check that it isn't unfit for transport
- Check for obstacles, reflections or other issues that could frighten them and correct it. Not possible? Give cattle some time to get used to get past the obstacle. Correct the issue before next (un)loading
- Use passive methods to move the cattle (e.g. encourage calmly the animals by gentle use of wood, plastic stick)
- Stimulate the animal to make it move by whistling or talking. Never hit the animal!
- Electric probes shall be avoided as far as possible and used on adult cattle only, when nothing prevent them to move forward (not more than 1 second!). Only use them on the external sides of the hinds quarters

✓ Unloading

1. In case of **delay at unloading**, assure good ventilation in the stopped vehicle (lateral shutters open, use force ventilation if available, park the vehicle in the shade)
2. Use the maximum width of the **corridor** and proper lighting for unloading at arrival
3. **Unload** cattle in **batches** adapted to pen size at arrival place
4. If an animal is **unfit** at arrival, make sure to isolate it and give it priority treatment
5. Use the same **passive methods** to move animals, as described in *'Loading'*
6. If all animals are unloaded, **clean and disinfect** the vehicle thoroughly
7. Return **journey log** to competent authorities and report any problem. **Even better!** Use monitoring data and problem reports, to improve travelling for the future