

Across the pond

By James Menzies

CALGARY, Alta. – So you think livestock truckers have it tough in Canada? Well, you won't get a lot of sympathy from across the pond.

Ed Harper, chairman of the U.K. Road Haulage Association's Livestock Haulage Group, says British livestock truckers face a myriad of challenges that are unrivalled elsewhere in the world.

Think diesel's expensive here? Try CDN\$9/gallon in the U.K. Find Canadian hours of service too restrictive? British drivers just had their allowable working hours trimmed substantially – and most of them have received no increase in pay to compensate.

To make matters worse, British livestock haulers must also adhere to strict hours of travel regulations for the animals themselves – and the two sets of rules don't exactly jive.

Drivers can only work 48 hours per week and, according to Harper: "We have serious problems with that, I can assure you."

That's largely because driver HOS are completely out of sync with the allowable travel times for livestock. Cattle can travel up to 14 hours straight, at which time they require a

one-hour rest before they can travel another 14 hours.

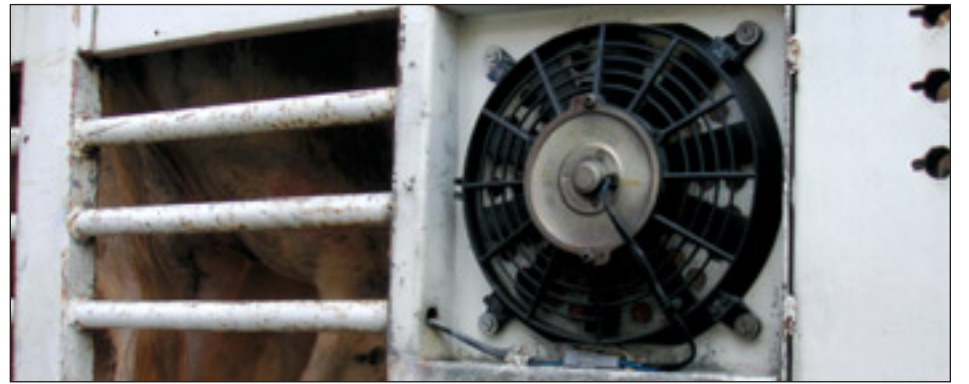
"The problem with that is that the driver can only go nine hours!" Harper said. (In a 29-hour period, cattle can spend 14 driving, one resting and another 14 driving, but the driver can often still only drive a total of nine hours.)

And in the U.K. the drivers are monitored by electronic tachometers, making it impossible to bend the rules.

"Even with two drivers, they're totally impossible hours to work to," said a frustrated Harper.

Pigs can travel 24 hours straight, provided they have continuous access to water, he added. They must then have a 24-hour rest during which time the pigs (those for export) have to remain on the truck. To top it off, British livestock haulers must travel by ferry for part of the journey – but Harper said many ferry companies refuse to transport loads of livestock.

But if they do, the driver's legal workday will occasionally expire while at sea. And by the time he's legally allowed to resume driving, the animals are often in a period of mandatory rest.



KEEP IT COOL: European trucks must have ventilation systems in place.

Add to this the fact that equipment used for long distance haulage in the U.K. is far more advanced than in Canada, Harper said. While virtually any kind of trailer can be used to haul livestock over short distances, anything over an eight hour haul requires highly specified trailers.

While pigs require a constant water supply, all livestock trailers used for long-distance hauls require adjustable ventilation, removable partitions and they must be equipped for a connection to a water supply.

Loads of up to 44 tonnes are permitted which can carry about 230 100-kg pigs for slaughter. These trailers are equipped with decks which can be lifted hydraulically. Fans are also used to control ventilation and temperatures.

All livestock carriers must submit

their equipment for inspections and stocking densities are closely monitored, Harper said.

Transporting animals is big business in the U.K., much as it is here at home. About 350,000 animals are slaughtered each week in the U.K. About 10 per cent of livestock hauls in Europe are considered long distance (more than 65 kms). Young animals are not allowed to be transported farther than 100 kms, and truckers must submit a route plan for anything over an eight hour journey. In-cab warning systems are required to alert the driver to any changes in temperature and satellite tracking systems are also compulsory, Harper said.

So if you think you've got it bad here – think again! □

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