



Alyn Smith MEP 



EURO NEWS MONTHLY SEPTEMBER 2008



SCOTLAND IN KEY POSITION ON ANIMAL BY-PRODUCTS RULES REDRAFT

Alyn has been appointed Rapporteur (draftsman) on the Opinion of the Agriculture Committee on the Regulation on Health Rules for Animal By-Products. The legislation deals with all forms of animal and farm waste not designed to enter either the human food or animal feed chain: it categorises the by-products based on risk, sets rules for their effective and safe processing and disposal, and sets up a system of monitoring and regulation of the whole process.

He said: "This dossier is of vital importance to farmers across Scotland, and a prime example of the technical but essential work that I am engaged in. I think much of what the Commission proposes goes in the right direction. The options for what to do with Category 2 and 3 by-products are much more flexible than in the past, and I fully approve of the Commission's new powers to move individual by-products between the categories, to take account of developments in our knowledge of the safety of these products.

"However, there are a few areas where I will table amendments to take the Commission a bit further. Scottish farmers face high costs in order to transfer their by-products to processing or disposal plants. I will strengthen the derogation in Article 28, which allows for the burning or burial on farm of animals in remote areas: the definition of remote areas must be much greater than currently allowed for, and derogations must be allowed on grounds of disproportionate financial cost for the farmer. As long as the carcass shows no sign of disease, I see no reason why farmers cannot dispose of their animals in a safe manner on their own farm.

"I am concerned about the implications for the Scottish fishing industry of the inclusion of aquatic animals in this Regulation. Theoretically, this could mean that trawlers which catch fish which look diseased or anomalous would be forbidden from throwing them back into the sea, and would have to take them back to port for processing and disposal! Clearly this makes no sense and I will try to delete this provision.

"I await submissions with anticipation, and depending upon the response I get I may organise a meeting to take on board all the views I can."

SMITH NOMINATES ANTI-STRASBOURG CAMPAIGN FOR EU PRIZE

Alyn caused consternation in certain circles by using "The Parliament's Prize" designed to honour those who have made a pro-EU contribution by nominating "the oneseat campaign" which seeks to site the European Parliament permanently in Brussels, ditching the wasteful monthly trek to Strasbourg. Smith's action comes at the end of a plenary week in Brussels where MEPs have, instead of going to Strasbourg and wasting time, money and carbon, been in Brussels because the roof of the Strasbourg building remains under repair. Alyn already proposed by heartfelt letter to the Parliament President to rename the Brussels chamber "Strasbourg" as a novel way to comply with the strict letter of treaty EU law obliging the Parliament to commute.

He said: "My initial exasperation when I received the nomination form for yet another pointless self-indulgent Parliament prize about nothing in particular turned to a mischievous glee at the notion that I could nominate the oneseat campaign. I have suggested to a number of other MEPs that we all nominate the campaign as another way to protest about our inefficient, costly and wasteful monthly commute.

"My heart sinks at the prospect of returning to Strasbourg in October. The last two plenary sessions have been more productive, more enjoyable, less costly and we have emitted nothing like the carbon we would have done had we continued the commute. Estimates vary and the Parliament authorities are being rather less than transparent, but by my reckoning €34million (€17m a session) is not an unreasonable guess at how much the taxpayer has saved each week.

"I understand a number of other MEPs are following my call to nominate oneseat and thank them for their support. A clear majority of MEPs want to rid the Parliament of the Strasbourg trek and I am of the view that only direct action will force this onto the agenda of the member states."





Alyn Smith MEP 



Above: The Mannekin Pis in Brussels appropriately dressed to celebrate St Andrew's Day by sporting the 'Scotland in Europe' tartan designed by students from Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh.

KILT "CLAN GATHERING" AS FIRST STEP TO EU PROTECTION FOR THE KILT

Alyn has welcomed the gathering in Perth of numerous kilt manufacturers with the intention of agreeing what actually constitutes a Scottish kilt. Smith has been campaigning at EU level for EU protection for Scotland's national garment, but the lack of a common accepted definition of what a kilt actually is has left the bid in stasis.

Alyn commented: "The announcement that kilt makers from across Scotland are meeting in Perth at a summit to discuss setting national standards for kilt making is music to my ears. This meeting is the first step towards protecting the integrity and reputation of kilt making in Scotland.

"For too long now we have seen cheap, poorly made, foreign knock-offs being passed off as kilts and it annoys me intensely, the things are not fit to be dishcloths. They undermine a market built on quality materials and first class tailoring. Scotland's tartan industry as a whole contributes some 4000 jobs and GBP350 million to the economy so it is worth protecting, and where there are EU means to do this we first need to ensure we can agree amongst ourselves on what a kilt actually is.

"Having done that there is European support available, and the European Commission has proposed an 'origin marking scheme' which would work a treat for protecting the kilt. However, many EU member states, including the UK have been unwilling to adopt this proposal so far.

"I'm delighted to see the industry in Scotland coming together and will do all I can to support them protect what's ours."

REASSURANCES SOUGHT ON HORSE AND ANIMAL WELFARE

Alyn has raised his concerns over claims that the EU's rules on the protection and promotion of animal welfare during transport are being ignored and openly flouted in many instances. The EU's rules, which came into effect in 2007 and are currently under review, are supposed to ensure the welfare of live animals, horses in particular, being transported long distances across Europe to slaughter.

Alyn has written to the European Health Commissioner to ask her to look into the claims by the magazine "Horse and Hound" and the international organisation "World Horse Welfare" that thousands of live horses are still being packed into lorries and transported to slaughter under inhumane conditions and that many of these lorries are failing to stop and rest the horses off the lorries after 24 hours of travelling as well as feed and water the horses after 8 hours.

Alyn said: "A number of my constituents have been in touch expressing their concern at the apparent appalling conditions in which hundreds of thousands of live horses are being transported thousands of miles into and across the EU every year to slaughter. While I'm glad that no Scots farmers or hauliers are implicated I'm told that many of these horses are still being packed into overcrowded metal lorries and transported either in soaring or freezing temperatures for as long as 24 hours without any food or water.

"The EU regulations in this area are very clear in terms of the animal welfare measures that have to be put in place for animals transported over eight hours, especially when it comes to rest stops and ensuring there are adequate levels of feed and water. I am concerned that the Commission may seek to tighten the rules further to the detriment of Scots farmers and hauliers, when in fact the problem is that the current rules are not being observed at all by some continental interests.

"I raised this issue last year with the Commission, but this remains unfinished business. That is why I am asking the Commission to investigate the concerns expressed by my constituents and clarify whether new rules are needed or whether the problem is in fact one of poor implementation by some member states of the existing rules".

Call 0131 525 8926 or email
Alyn.smith@europarl.europa.eu
Alynsmith.blogspot.com
www.alynsmith.eu

107 McDonald Road Edinburgh, EH7 4NW.