Animal Welfare Approved Guidelines for Red Meat Slaughter Facilities

The Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW programme and food label promote the well-being of animals and the sustainability of humane family farms and meat plants. We unite conscientious consumers with farmers and meat producers who raise and harvest their animals with compassion. Our label adds value to meat products for those people who are raising, handling, and harvesting meat animals.

The Guidelines for Red Meat Slaughter Facilities should be followed by plants that slaughter cattle, bison, hogs, sheep and goats. Plants that slaughter poultry and rabbits should refer to the Guidelines for White Meat Slaughter Facilities.

1.0 GENERAL

1.0.1 Flooring where live animals are moved must provide good traction to prevent falling or slipping.

Note: Falling and slipping can make handling more difficult, cause injury for animals and staff, and damage meat quality. In cold weather, salt or coarse dairy lime may be needed to prevent slipping and falling due to ice.

1.0.2 Flooring must not cause hoof or foot damage.

1.0.3 Facilities must be designed, constructed and maintained in such a way that they do not pose a risk, or inflict injury or damage to the animals.

1.0.4 Action must be taken to reduce sources of distraction such as shafts of light, flooring contrasts, shadows on the floor, and foreign objects from all areas where live animals are moved to encourage their movement.

Note: These situations and objects are known to cause animals to balk and panic.

1.0.5 Action must be taken to decrease human activity and noise in any area accessed by the animals.

Note: Noise and movement are known to impede easy movement of animals.

1.1 Handling

1.1.1 All animals must be moved in a calm and consistent manner taking advantage of species specific behaviour such as flight distance.

1.1.2 When handling or moving animals stress from loud noises and rapid movements must be minimised.

1.1.3 Animals must not be forced to move if there is not enough space ahead for them to move into.

1.1.4 The use of electrical prods in normal animal handling is prohibited.

Note: Electrical prods may be used as a last resort, in the case of risk to health and safety of animals or of employees. The user must be able to demonstrate that not using the prod would result in an immediate risk to the welfare of the animal or an employee.

1.1.5 There must be a goal of no electrical prod use.

1.1.6 The plant must monitor any use of electrical prods.

1.1.7 If it is found that an electrical prod was used when there was no risk to the health or safety of animals or employees alternative methods of animal movement must be introduced.

1.1.8 If it is found that electrical prods are frequently needed in a particular area of the plant that area should be redesigned.

1.1.9 Abuse or maltreatment of animals is prohibited. The following actions are prohibited and are considered by Animal Welfare Approved to constitute animal cruelty:

1.1.9.1 Shackling, dragging, hanging, cutting, bleeding or dressing any sensible animal

1.1.9.2 Beating or striking any animal

1.1.9.3 Intentional electrical prodding or poking of an animal in a sensitive area such as the anus, the eyes or the genitals

1.1.9.4 Picking up or throwing a sheep by its wool

1.1.9.5 Intentionally driving animals over an animal that has fallen or will not move

1.1.9.6 Any other action that causes intentional harm to an animal

1.1.10 Vibrating prods must be equipped with a blunt tip

1.2 Downed animals

1.2.1 Downed animals that cannot rise and move spontaneously under their own strength to get off a transport vehicle must be immediately euthanised in a manner that renders them immediately insensible to pain.

Note: Please contact Animal Welfare Approved *if further information on appropriate methods of euthanasia is required.*

1.2.2 Animals that have been unloaded to holding pens and are subsequently found to be unable to rise and move spontaneously under their own strength must be segregated and allowed to rest comfortably to see if they will recover.

Note: Suitable bedding should be provided and moribund animals must have access to water.

1.2.3 Animals that show no sign of recovery after segregation and rest must be euthanised.

1.2.4 Downed animals must not be dragged or moved for disposal prior to euthanisation.

1.2.5 Meat from downed animals that have been euthanised must not carry the *Animal Welfare Approved* seal.

1.3 Inspection of facilities

1.3.1 The unloading area, holding pens and stunning area must be inspected before operations commence each day and at intervals thereafter to ensure cleanliness and safety.

1.3.2 Inspections of the unloading area, holding pens and stunning area along with any problems and their correction must be documented.

2.0 UNLOADING AREAS

2.0.1 Animals must be unloaded from transport vehicles as soon as possible after arrival at the slaughter facility.

2.0.2 Animals must not remain on transport vehicles longer than one hour after arriving at the slaughter facility.

2.0.3 If there is an unavoidable delay or breakdown that means animals must remain on the transport vehicle for longer than one hour the plant must make sure they have shade, shelter, ventilation and water as appropriate.

Note: The best air flow and comfort for the animals may be maintained by keeping the transport vehicle moving.

2.0.4 Unloading facilities must be of a height to allow animals to unload from transportation without jumping or leaping.

2.0.5 Unloading areas, alleys, and ramps must provide enough room such that animals can walk freely down the ramp.

2.0.6 Lighting must be sufficient to encourage animal movement in unload areas.

Note: Animals prefer to move from dark to light.

3.0 HOLDING PENS AND ALLEYS

3.0.1 Clean water must be provided in the holding pen or anywhere the animals are to be held longer than 30 minutes.

3.0.2 Holding pens or any other areas where animals are to be held must provide adequate room to allow animals to access water.

3.0.3 Pens must allow protection of animals against extreme heat, cold, and inclement weather. This could include ventilation, shade, wind breaks, the ability to wet animals with a coarse spray, and bedding depending on the season and climate.

3.0.4 If the design of the holding pen allows it, bedding must be provided when animals are held overnight.

Note: It may not be possible to provide bedding where it would impede drainage.

3.0.5 Animals from different farms or transport groups must not be mixed in holding pens.

4.0 STUNNING AREA, RESTAINING SYSTEMS, AND STUN BOX

4.0.1 Stun boxes with sloped flooring or flooring otherwise designed to make animals fall are prohibited.

4.0.2 Restraining systems must be designed to minimise stress to the animal and ensure that animals can breathe normally in restraint.

4.0.3 Appropriate light must be provided, if necessary, to encourage animals enter stun boxes.

4.0.4 Distractions such as hanging objects and loud noises in the stunning area must be eliminated.

4.0.5 If animals do not enter the stun box freely all activity must cease on the kill floor OR the view from the stun box to the kill floor must be blocked.

Note: Movement or noise causes animals to balk so animals will not enter places or will panic where they see movement or hear excessive noise on the kill floor.

4.0.6 The stun box must be designed or adapted to ensure effective stunning of the species being slaughtered can take place.

4.0.7 In plants that electrically stun animals, the box or stunning area must be made or covered in a non-conducting material.

5.0 STUNNING AND SLAUGHTER

5.0.1 Stunning must render animals immediately insensible to pain on the first attempt.

5.0.2 Stunning must ensure animals remain insensible to pain until the animal dies due to slaughter or blood loss.

5.0.3 All animals must be rendered insensible to pain prior to being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut.

5.0.4 If any sign of sensibility is observed at any time after stunning, the animal must be re-stunned immediately.

Note: In some plants it is the policy to carry out a second "safety" stun with gun or captive bolt, or a second electrical stun to maintain insensibility. This is acceptable if the animal is rendered insensible on the first stun.

5.0.5 Equipment used to stun, shackle, bleed and kill an animal must be kept and maintained in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

5.0.6 Equipment used to stun, shackle, bleed and kill and animal must only be used within the design parameters described by the manufacturer.

5.0.7 For all stunning equipment there must be a manual back-up or reserve equipment for use in case of emergency or breakdown.

5.0.8 Staff that carry out stunning and bleeding must have been trained and be competent to use the available equipment.

5.1 Approved methods of stunning

Note: The following methods marked ** are permitted in South Africa under these standards – only when they have the prior approval of the provincial executive officer.

5.1.1 The approved methods for rendering cattle and bison insensible are:

5.1.1.1 Penetrating captive bolt.

5.1.1.2 Non-penetrating captive bolt.

5.1.1.3 Free bullet from a gun.**

5.1.1.4 Head and heart electrocution.**

5.1.2 The approved methods for rendering hogs insensible are:

5.1.2.1 Controlled atmosphere stunning or killing using anoxic gases.**

5.1.2.2 Controlled atmosphere stunning or killing using CO2.**

5.1.2.3 Free bullet from a gun.**

5.1.2.4 Head and heart electrocution.**

5.1.2.5 Head only electric stunning.

5.1.2.6 Penetrating captive bolt.

Note: If captive bolt stunners are used for hogs the equipment must be maintained, positioned and used such that an adequate stun is obtained. See also section 5.3 below.

5.1.3 The approved methods for rendering sheep and goats insensible are:

5.1.3.1 Penetrating captive bolt.

5.1.3.2 Non-penetrating captive bolt.

5.1.3.3 Free bullet from a gun.**

5.1.3.4 Head and heart electrocution.**

5.1.3.5 Head only stunning.

5.2 Use of free bullet from a gun**

5.2.1 When using a gun, a type that has sufficient power and caliber for the species in question must be used.

5.2.2 Persons using guns to stun animals must be trained in safe handling and proper stunning placement as angles and where to aim vary from species to species.

5.2.3 If animals show signs of recovery after use of a free bullet action must be taken to assess and resolve the reason.

5.3 Use of a penetrating or non-penetrating captive bolt stunner

5.3.1 When using a captive bolt gun or mushroom stunner a type of sufficient power with the right cartridge or propellant according to the manufacturer's specifications must be used.

5.3.2 Captive bolt stunners must be cleaned and maintained according to manufacturers specification

5.3.3 Persons using captive bolt guns or mushroom stunners must be trained in safe handling and proper stunning placement as angles and where to aim vary from species to species.

5.3.4 A penetrative captive bolt must enter the brain to provide an effective stun.

5.3.5 If animals show signs of recovery after this type of stunning action must be taken to assess and resolve the reason.

5.4 Use of electrical stunning

Electrical stunning encompasses three methods. Head only stunning, head-to-back stunning and stunning in two cycles; first across the head and secondly across the chest.

5.4.1 Electrical stunning must provide a strong enough current and be in contact with the animal for long enough so that it is immediately unconscious.

5.4.1.1 A minimum of 1.25 Amps must be passed through the brain to stun pigs.

5.4.1.2 A minimum of 1.00 Amps must be passed through the brain to stun sheep.

5.4.2 Electrodes must be placed to span the brain of the animal.

5.4.3 Persons using electricity to stun animals must be trained in safe handling and proper stunning placement based on the species being stunned.

5.4.4 Stunning equipment must only be used on the species that the manufacturer recommends and which it is designed for.

5.4.5 **Recommended**
Stun settings and voltages should be recorded when electrical stunning is in use.

5.4.6 **Recommended**
Head followed by heart stunning which will kill rather than stun the animal should be used instead of head only stunning.

5.5 Use of Controlled Atmosphere Stunning (CAS) and Controlled Atmosphere Killing (CAK)**

5.5.1 **Recommended**

Controlled Atmosphere Stunning (CAS) and Controlled Atmosphere Killing (CAK) systems should be used to render hogs insensible.

5.5.2 The controlled atmosphere system must rapidly cause insensibility.

5.5.3 Persons using the gas stunner must be trained in proper use of the stunning system.

5.5.4 **Recommended**
The use of anoxic gases rather than CO2 is recommended for both CAS and CAK.

5.5.5 The gas system must be used according to manufacturer's instructions.

5.5.6 In a CO2 system no more than thirty seconds must elapse after a pig has entered the chamber before it is in a gas concentration of 85% or more.

5.5.7 In a CO2 system a dwell time of two and half minutes is required.

5.5.8 Gas concentration must be recorded.

5.5.9 No pig must enter the chamber if the displayed concentration by volume of carbon dioxide in the gas mixture falls below 80%.

5.6 Bleeding

5.6.1 Animals must be monitored to ensure there is no return to sensibility between stun and bleed out and if any are seen it must be re-stunned immediately**.**

5.6.2 All animals must be bled as soon as possible after stunning.

5.6.2.1 Sheep, goats and hogs stunned by methods that are normally non-recoverable, such as head to heart stun and penetrative captive bolt, must be bled within 60 seconds of stun.

5.6.2.2 Sheep, goats and hogs stunned by methods that are normally recoverable, such as head only electric stun or non-penetrative captive bolt, must be bled within 15 seconds of stun.

5.6.2.3 Cattle and bison must be bled as soon as possible and this must be within 60 seconds of stun.

5.6.3 The bleed wound must be large and allow rapid bleeding.

Note: The carotids or arteries from which they originate from must be severed, depending upon the species. The objective is to stop supply of oxygenated blood to the brain.

5.6.4 If more than one animal is loaded into the stun box the first animal must be stunned and bled before any further animals are stunned.

Note: Cattle may only be loaded into the cattle stun box individually. A restraining pen of 2m x 2m or, preferably, a crowing pen provided with a hinged gate to facilitate floor space reduction must be provided for sheep, goats and pigs.

5.6.5 Not allocated.

5.6.6 Animals may only be dressed after having bled for eight minutes for cattle and six minutes for calves, pigs and sheep.

6.0 STAFF AND TRAINING

6.0.1 There should be a named individual responsible for animal welfare within the facility that has the authority to take action should any welfare issues arise.

6.0.2 Training in humane methods of animal handling must be made available to all staff working with live animals.

6.0.3 Staff must be trained to recognise signs of effective and ineffective stunning and signs of recovery of consciousness.

6.0.4 There must be clearly written standard operating procedures for every step of the operation and staff responsible for animal handling, stunning and slaughter must be familiar with these procedures.

7.0 LEGISLATION AND TRACEABILITY

7.0.1 Only abattoirs that are registered in terms of MSA 2000 (act 40 of 2000) and approved in accordance with legislation to slaughter animals may be used for the slaughter of animals in terms of this protocol.

7.0.2 Only abattoirs that have passed the independent Hygiene Assessment System will qualify for use in the program.

A HAS assessment must be carried out by the abattoir owner and results provided to the provincial executive officer for verification as he or she may require. Any non-compliances identified and remedial action taken will be reviewed at inspection.

7.1 CLASSIFICATION

7.1.1 All classes currently being used in the meat industry for the classification of carcasses may be accepted from high, medium and low throughout abattoirs that normally do class.

7.1.2 Carcasses classified as CALF may not be accepted in terms of this protocol.

7.1.3 Carcasses that have not been classed will also be accepted in terms of this protocol. Such carcasses will be subjected to the contractual agreement the farmer with the buyer, except for when the farmer is processing himself and sells to the consumer directly but must be stated clearly in traceability documentation.

7.1.4 The correct approved AGW meat stamp must be placed on each rump and brisket on the quarters of the approved carcasses.

7.1.5 A full traceability system for any product that may carry an AGW seal must be in place at the abattoir. This must record individual and batch serial numbers that correspond to the farmer's submitted declaration of health and origin, and if necessary, claim of breed and or co-branding.

7.2 DEBONING PLANTS, MEAT WHOLESALERS AND BUTCHERY

7.2.1 Deboning plants and meat wholesalers that cut, process and/or package meat for resale and /or use must be registered and operated with a current Certificate of acceptability as required by law.

7.2.2 Deboning plants and meat wholesalers must operate in clean and hygienic conditions, to ensure food safety and the prevention of foreign body contamination.

7.2.3 Must obtain documentation pertaining to the origin of the meat from the person (company) making such delivery and the time of delivery.

7.2.4 Must ensure that the applicable Communal Farmers registered stamp as well as any other relevant registered meat stamp when applicable is clearly visible on all areas as prescribed;

7.2.5 Must demonstrate traceability. A full traceability system for any product that may carry an AGW seal must be in place at the premises: This must record individual and batch serial numbers that correspond to the farmer's submitted declaration of health and origin, and if necessary, claim of breed and or co-branding.

7.3 BUTCHERS, RETAILERS, HOTELS & RESTAURANTS

7.3.1 Must be registered and operate with a current Certificate of Acceptability as required by law.

7.3.2 Must operate in clean and hygienic conditions to ensure food safety and the prevention of foreign body contamination.

7.3.3 Must display on the packaging should have some form of a link to show traceability of the meat in the form of –batch number or different batch numbers, or date processed or details of deboning plant, and when possible full reference back to the farmer.

7.3.4 Must clearly label the meat as grass-fed as applicable if sold under the terms of this Protocol.

7.3.5 Hotels and restaurants selling grass-fed under this protocol must be able to trace the meat to an approved deboning plant meat wholesaler, a butchery and/or retailer should be able to convey traceability to consumers.

7.3.6 Must demonstrate traceability: A full traceability system for any product that may carry an AGW seal must be in place at the premises. This must record individual and batch serial numbers that correspond to the farmer's submitted declaration of health and origin, and if necessary, claim of breed and or co-branding.