



Federation of Veterinarians of Europe

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Introduction

According to the FVE Code of Good Veterinary Practice, veterinarians shall endeavour to ensure the welfare and health of the animals under their care, in whichever section of the veterinary profession they work (FVE GVP code, 2002).

As much concern has been raised regarding the slaughter of animals without prior stunning, for ritual purposes or due to mal practice during ordinary slaughter, FVE undertook to review the scientific aspects of slaughter without prior stunning, in relation to animal welfare and food hygiene.

According to Council Directive 93/119/EC, animals shall be spared any avoidable pain or suffering at the time of slaughter or killing. Therefore, solipeds, ruminants, pigs, rabbits and poultry shall be stunned before slaughter or killed instantaneously. However, as certain religious groups require that animals should not be stunned prior to slaughter, the directive allows limited derogations to take account of the particular requirements of certain religious rites.

Most Member States did use these derogations to allow the slaughter of animals without prior stunning. Outside the European Union however, in countries such as Switzerland, slaughter without prior stunning is prohibited. It is also noteworthy that in other parts of the world, in New Zealand in particular, protocols have been developed, which allow specific methods of stunning whilst meeting the requirements of some of the religious rites.

Annex

Minimum requirements for slaughter without prior stunning.

However, as long as any derogation is allowed under national or European legislation, the following minimum requirements shall be respected for the slaughter of animals without prior stunning.

- Slaughterhouses should be specifically approved for this purpose and the approval should be subject to suitable equipment being available.
- Slaughtering outside a licensed slaughterhouse must not be allowed. No exceptions shall be allowed.
- Staff involved at the point of slaughter must be specifically trained for the purpose. This training must include technical aspects to be decided by the competent authority in addition to any training given by religious authorities. It should include an examination and continual improvement of the slaughterers. The initial training should be carried out on stunned or dead animals.
- The slaughtering process must be in the permanent presence of a veterinarian who has the authority and obligation to intervene whenever necessary.
- Animals for ritual slaughter must be pre-selected. Only animals destined for the consumption of the religious community concerned should be subject to the ritual.
- The farmer who produced the animal has the right to know how his animal will be slaughtered.
- The "Weinberg" pen must be banned.
- Bovines should not be inverted for the purpose of slaughtering.
- Should slaughtering take place without prior stunning, animals should be stunned immediately following the cut.
- For poultry, the speed of the line must be adapted to guarantee that each animal can be slaughtered manually.
- The knife has to be razor sharp and its length must be at least twice of the width of the neck.
- Animals shall not be restrained until the slaughterman is ready to slaughter them. The cut must then be carried out immediately after restraint and consist of one uninterrupted movement in which both carotid arteries and both jugular veins are cut.
- The wound edges must not come together and the animal must remain in the restrained, upright position until death ensues.
- The carcass and all products derived from it must be labelled so as to clearly indicate the method of slaughter used, including whether or not prior stunning was employed.
- Product imported from third countries should comply with identical standards to those laid down for Europe.

Slaughter of animals without prior stunning

Principle

FVE is of the opinion that from an animal welfare point of view, and out of respect for an animal as a sentient being, the practice of slaughtering animals without prior stunning is unacceptable under any circumstances, for the following reasons:

- Slaughter without stunning increases the time to loss of consciousness, sometimes up to several minutes. During this period of consciousness the animal can be exposed to unnecessary pain and suffering due to:

- *exposed wound surfaces;*
- *the possible aspiration of blood and, in the case of ruminants, rumen content;*
- *the possible suffering from asphyxia after severing the n. phrenicus and n. vagus.*

- Slaughter without prior stunning requires in most cases additional restraint, which may cause additional stress to an animal that is almost certainly already frightened.

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