

# **THE SOUTH AFRICAN PIG WELFARE CODE**

## **PREAMBLE**

This code of practice, as a statement of intent, has been drawn up by representatives of the South African Pork Producers Organisation, the Pig Veterinary Society, the National Council of SPCA's, the Livestock Animal Welfare Association, the previous Meat Board & ABAKOR under the auspices of the Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee and is intended to be a supplementary set of rules that in no way supersedes or contradicts existing legislation concerning the care and handling of pigs or the provisions of meat hygiene regulations. This code is based on the knowledge and technology available at the time of publication and may need to be changed in the light of future knowledge. It does not replace the need for experience and common sense in the husbandry of animals.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This code is based on the belief that pigs should be afforded the five freedoms of Webster, namely:

- 1. Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition**
- 2. Freedom from discomfort**
- 3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease**
- 4. Freedom to express normal behaviour**
- 5. Freedom from fear and distress**

## **STOCKMANSHIP, HUSBANDRY AND HEALTH CARE**

1. Stock workers and owners must be appropriately trained to handle pigs, and perform routine procedures in a manner, which is clean and causes minimum discomfort.
2. Routine procedures, which may be performed by the owner or trained stock workers are the following:
  - Injections (the neck muscles are the preferred site).
  - Tail docking, teeth clipping, ear notching and castration of piglets up to 7 days of age.
  - Uncomplicated wound and injury care, claw trimming, tattooing, use of antiseptics, pesticides; manual assistance with farrowing; sheath washing of boars; semen collection and insemination on the home property, pregnancy testing with externally applied apparatus.

3. The following practices are forbidden: - Kicking pigs, the use of electric prodders, whips, metal rods, heavy sticks or other objects liable to injure or terrify pigs, picking up by the ears, tail or foreleg. The breaking or cutting or sawing of boars' teeth at any time is prohibited, except when performed by a veterinarian with appropriate anaesthesia.
4. Animal waste and waste products must be handled in such a way as to minimise the risk of discomfort and spread of disease to other animals or to humans, and in a way that keeps pollution to a minimum.
5. Strict control of parasites, flies and rodents must be maintained at all times.
6. For the measurement of back fat in live pigs, only non-invasive and painless methods such as the use of ultrasonic equipment are permissible.

## **1. Tethers**

**1.1** No new tether systems are to be installed from date of publication. No neck tethers are to be used at all.

**1.2** Girth tethers must be made of broad bands of webbing or similar material that will not fold or cause damage to the skin, and must be secured by means of a smooth chain to a countersunk fixture in the floor.

The chain must be long enough to allow movement within the sow's stall, but not so long as to allow entanglement with the adjacent sow.

**1.3** All tether systems are to phase out by 31st December 1999.

## **2. Crates and creep areas**

**2.1** Dry sow and farrowing crates must be designed and built to allow the sow to stand or lie comfortably with her legs naturally extended. The udders of lactating sows must not be obstructed by any structures or parts of the farrowing crate

It is recommended that sows be given the opportunity to spend time out of crates or tethers, in alternative accommodation. This accommodation should allow the pig to perform its natural body functions in a manner which is relatively unrestricted and which will not permit opportunities for active aggression from other animals in that area.

**2.2** A safe creep area with bedding and provision for warmth for piglets must be provided in the farrowing pen, so that a temperature suitable for piglets will be maintained in the creep by means of insulation and/or artificial heating.

Heating devices must be placed in such a manner that piglets cannot be harmed or the heater interfered with.

**2.3** Rapid fluctuation in temperature should be avoided in the farrowing house.

3. Floors must be finished to be non-slip and allow for easy cleaning without being abrasive or causing pigs difficulty in standing or moving. Slats must be aligned evenly and spaced to avoid danger of injury to feet and legs.
4. Housing and crates must be well drained and must be kept in a hygienic condition.
5. Pens indoor or outdoor, and handling facilities must be constructed and maintained to avoid animal discomfort and injuries. Ventilation or special cooling methods should be adequate to avoid overheating of pigs.
6. Pigs must have suitable shelter from direct sunlight, winds and inclement weather.
7. Separate pens or sufficient space must be provided for housing different categories of pigs to avoid unnecessary distress, bullying or injury. Consideration must be given to size, numbers, sex, maturity and purpose when mixing pigs in confined areas.

The floor allocation in pens should allow a minimum of 0,85 m<sup>2</sup> per 100 kg of live mass.

## 8. **Pigs kept outdoors**

8.1 Outdoor pigs must be supplied with: -

Appropriate enclosures which allow a minimum of 5 m<sup>2</sup> per adult pig, and are designed to provide a warm and adequately ventilated draught free area for all classes of pig, and which are free from water-logging or persistent muddiness other than in a wallow.

8.2 Feeding and watering facilities which minimise fouling and wastage, and which ensure access to clean water at all times.

8.3 Effective fencing to confine and control the stock and adequate handling/isolation facilities for dealing with animals undergoing routine procedures or which are sick or injured or require attention.

8.4 Farrowing hutches supplied with plentiful bedding and shelter from inclement weather. Hutches should be designed to minimise overlying of piglets by the sow, and to confine piglets to the hutch for the first week of life.

## **9. Boars**

- 9.1 Boars may be kept on their own or in small compatible groups until mature. A boar may be kept with a group of breeding gilts or dry sows, provided bullying does not occur.
- 9.2 Individual accommodation for adult boars should have a floor area of not less than 7,5 m<sup>2</sup>, with the shortest side not less than 2,5 m. The pen divisions should not be less than 1,5 m high, and gates must be secure. If used for living purposes and service purposes, the floor area should not be less than 10m<sup>2</sup>.

## **10. Sick and injured pigs**

- 10.1 Pigs should be inspected at least daily for signs of vices, bullying or injury, illness or distress. Lighting, natural or artificial, should be readily available to allow inspections at any time to enable remedial action to be taken in cases of vice, bullying, injury, parasitic infestation or disease.

Vices: - Pigs may develop vices, typically tail biting and ear biting. Personnel must identify and minimise their causes. Too much light, overcrowding, inadequate ventilation, competition at the feeding or watering place and barren environmental conditions can contribute to the problem.

- 10.2 Sick or bullied pigs require isolation from aggressive pen-mates.
- 10.3 Sick pigs must be given first aid or appropriate veterinary attention promptly.
- 10.4 Seriously injured or terminally sick animals must be immediately and humanely destroyed.

## **NUTRITION**

1. All pigs must have access to clean drinking water at all times.
2. All pigs must have access to adequate quantities of suitable wholesome feed every day.

## **TRANSPORT** - *This should be read in conjunction with the SA Code of Practice for Handling and Transporting of Livestock*

1. Whenever possible, pigs must be transported during the cooler part of the day. They must in any case be protected from direct sun, excessive cold and wind-chill and exhaust gases.
2. Sick and injured pigs should only be transported for purposes of getting veterinary treatment or for humane slaughter and must be separated from other pigs if on the same vehicle.

3. The vehicle must have: -
  - 3.1 A free flow of air over all pigs being transported. The sucking of exhaust gases into the load area and wind chill in cold conditions must be prevented.
  - 3.2 Provision for at least 80 % shade cloth or solid covering over the top if pigs are transported during the heat of the day for periods in excess of two hours.
  - 3.3 Provision for appropriate partitioning to separate different categories of pigs, or to divide large numbers into smaller groups to avoid crushing, fighting or bullying.
  - 3.4 A floor, which is constructed, and/or covered to prevent slipping.
  - 3.5 Sides high enough to prevent pigs jumping out of the vehicle.
  - 3.6 Internal surfaces and structures that will not cause injury to pigs.
  - 3.7 Loading gate(s) large enough to allow free movement of pigs during loading and off-loading
4. Pigs being transported over long distances must be provided with water within 18 hours.
5. Loading and driving
  - 5.1 Loading ramps and platforms must be built or adapted to match vehicle height and loading gate and also to ensure that pigs cannot escape or fall off. Inclines should not exceed 20°.
  - 5.2 Loading and unloading must be done quietly and with minimum force - the use of boards or rolled plastic bags where their use is necessary is recommended. No electric prodders are to be used.

**The vehicle must be abutted against the platform so as to avoid any gaps, which may lead to injury of pigs.**
  - 5.3 Drivers of motor vehicles must ensure a smooth ride and only stop the vehicle when absolutely necessary, and then on a level surface only.
  - 5.4 Owners/managers must at all times have pre-arranged contingency plans for emergencies such as breakdowns.
  - 5.5 Drivers of motor vehicles transporting pigs should under no circumstances drive at an excessive speed or at any speed, which could be detrimental to the well being of the pigs concerned.

## **ABATTOIRS**

### **1. Lairage**

- 1.1 Off-loading areas and passageways must be such as to allow free movement of pigs from vehicle to holding pens.
- 1.2 Water sprays or hoses must be used for cleaning and cooling hot, dirty or fractious pigs.
- 1.3 Pigs from different origins must be penned separately, in accordance with their origins.
- 1.4 Pens and passage ways must have non-slip floors, rounded corners, secure gates and sides with no projections and be kept in good repair. Protection from sun, rain and cold winds must be provided.
- 1.5 The whole lairage must be cleaned regularly but at least once a day.
- 1.6 Personnel handling pigs must be trained in welfare standards and in the use of boards and non-damaging "slaps" to ensure that stress and injury are minimised. Electric prodders are not permitted for use on pigs.
- 1.7 All pens must be supplied with readily accessible clean water for pigs of all sizes. Both troughs and nipple drinkers should be provided.
- 1.8 Pigs should be slaughtered within a few hours of being penned unless they are exhausted or distressed, in which case they should be given appropriate attention on veterinary advice.

### **2. Stunning and sticking**

- 2.1 The slaughter staff must be trained in the principles of efficient and humane stunning. Management and supervisory staff must ensure that proper methods are consistently used.
- 2.2 No pig shall be stunned until the previously stunned pig has been hoisted for sticking and moved away from the stunning area.
- 2.3 Wherever possible, pigs should be stunned by means of electrical apparatus. Captive bolt pistols may be used on individual animals (such as mature boars) where electrical stunning is impractical or inadvisable.
- 2.4 Stunning apparatus must be kept in faultless working order and be used only in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations to achieve optimum stunning
- 2.5 Pigs must be restrained in a stunning race or closely confined in the stunning pen to avoid unnecessary chasing.

It is forbidden to use stunning apparatus for any purpose other than stunning, for example to immobilise pigs by application to parts other than head or neck.

- 2.6 Good contact between electrodes and the pig's head or neck is best achieved by applying wet electrodes on a dry pig to avoid scattering of current to earth.
- 2.7 The criterion for efficient stunning is to pass a current of at least 1,3 amperes through the brain of the pig with sufficient voltage and for long enough to ensure unconsciousness. With presently available equipment, the recommended amperage voltages and times of application are: -

	<b>Amps</b>	<b>Voltage</b>	<b>Time</b>
Porkers and baconers	1,3	220 - 240	5 - 10 sec
Adult pigs	1,3	240 or more	10 - 20 sec

**NB:** - Research, both local and in collaboration with overseas institutions, is urgently needed to devise optimum electrical stunning methods and apparatus and the necessary monitoring equipment, to ensure that the stunning of pigs is done humanely and in the spirit of this welfare code.

- 2.8 Effective stunning can be presumed when the pig has stopped breathing, its hind legs are fully extended and the corneal reflex is absent (i.e. touching the eye surface produces no reaction of the eyelids). This may take up to 20 Seconds or even longer with low voltages e.g. 100 V.
- 2.9 Sticking must follow stunning without delay and should be achieved within 20 seconds.
- 2.10 Pigs must not be put into the scalding tank before they are dead.