

## **PERIOD BETWEEN STUNNING & STICKING AT ABATTOIRS**

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Animal welfare is receiving increased attention in the production of meat. The potential role in the quality of the product is also recognised.

International guidelines provide for special pre cautions when stunning is reversible. The Terrestrial Health Code of the OIE (Chapter 7.5) Slaughter of Animals – Item 5) recommend a maximum stun to stick interval of 20 seconds for electrical and the captive bolt method.

Although the Red Meat Regulations of the Meat Safety Act provide for an animal to be bled within 60 seconds after stunning (article 74) we advise abattoirs to follow the international guidelines of a stun to stick interval to 10 to 20 seconds for sheep and pigs. In many cases and situations it is possible to shorten these times considerably and abattoir owners should consider the provision in the regulations to bleed in a horizontal position but to bring the animal to a hanging position immediately after the bleeding incision is made. This will minimise the chance of stunned animals regaining any form of consciousness before they are killed by blood loss.

It is a requirement of the regulations to ensure that a written program and records of competence are provided for all workers on the correct slaughter techniques. From a welfare perspective this competence is especially important for the animal handlers, stunning and bleeding.