

**LIVESTOCK WELFARE  
COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

# **CODE OF PRACTICE**

## **HANDLING OF LIVESTOCK AT SALEYARDS AND VENDING SITES**

**Drawn up by the Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee  
in furtherance of livestock welfare in South Africa**

**Revised: November 2018**

# CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE HANDLING OF LIVESTOCK AT SALEYARDS AND VENDING SITES

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Throughout the context of this Code the term livestock means cattle, sheep, pigs and goats.

This CODE is to be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice for the Transport and Handling of Livestock, as well as the Animals Protection Act, 1962 (Act 71 of 1962, as amended)

## FOREWORD

Poor publicity on animal cruelty in the livestock industry was experienced in the late seventies. The Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee was consequently established in 1978. Members of twenty-three animal welfare organizations and organizations in the livestock industry and State coordinate efforts in the interest of livestock welfare. Participating members as recorded in November 2018 were as follows:

- < Livestock Animal Welfare Association
- < National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- < Red Meat Abattoir Association
- < SA Studbook
- < Red Meat Producers Organization
- < National Wool Growers Association
- < SA Federation of Livestock Auctioneers
- < Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries
- < SA Pork Producers Organization
- < SA Veterinary Association
- < SA Feedlot Association
- < Red Meat Industry Forum
- < Milk Producers Organization
- < SA Bureau of Standards
- < International Meat Quality Assurance Services
- < SA Police Service
- < SA Ostrich Business Chamber
- < National Emergent Red Meat Producers Organization
- < Faculty of Veterinary Science
- < Department of Animal and Wildlife Sciences
- < Agency for Food Safety
- < Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- < Animal Welfare Working Group /DAFF

From an animal science point of view no conflict exists between the humane treatment of animals and good animal husbandry: Losses are prevented and production efficiencies enhanced. Humane handling of livestock was also found to be beneficial to the shelf life and quality of meat.

The image of an industry furthermore reflects on its products and affects consumer demand. Unquestionably, therefore, the benefits of high standards of livestock welfare include profitability.

It is the Committee's objective to take the necessary actions to ensure the humane handling of slaughter stock from production to slaughter.

The aim with this code: **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE HANDLING OF LIVESTOCK AT SALEYARDS AND VENDING SITES** is to set norms for the acceptable treatment of livestock.

The code was approved by the various organizations representing people affected by the code. The Code was legally edited by the National Department of Agriculture's Sub-directorate: Legal Services. **The moral conscience and financial interests of the Livestock and Meat Industry can best be served by promoting the wellbeing of its animals. The wellbeing of the animals in our care shall be considered at all times. Cruel or inhumane handling of livestock shall be avoided during all the stages of production, transport, marketing and slaughter. The welfare of livestock can only be achieved if, at all levels within the industry, they are handled with patience and tolerance and with an understanding of their instinctual and natural behavior and basic needs. Every reasonable effort should be made to protect the animals from physical injury, undue stress or suffering, harmful elements or deprivation of essential needs. The financial and moral benefits to the Meat Industry will be further enhanced if the handling of livestock is accompanied by an awareness that they are living, sentient beings.**

## 1 Objectives of the Code of Practice

The objectives of this code of Practice are to include in any person involved in the sale yard industry (including livestock vending) a disposition that will include him/her:

- a) To ensure responsible and humane handling of livestock at all times and in all situations in order to not cause avoidable suffering:
- b) To introduce reasonable operating norms to producers, handlers, transport contractor, the public and the law:
- c) To aim to positive preventative measures with a view to preventing the cruelty and financial loss associated with severe injuries, which could also include condemnation due to bruising and death.

In order to achieve the above objectives, which would also be to the advantage of the owner of the animal and the person in whose care the animal is at any given moment, anyone involved in the handling of livestock shall constantly bear the above points in mind and will have to take responsibility for abiding by the Code.

## 2 General

**2.1** Auctions and vending sites shall not take place during extreme weather conditions liable to cause injuries or significant stress to the livestock, unless adequate protection is provided.

**2.2** No livestock under the age of 21 days are to be permitted at any sale yard or vending site unless accompanied by its mother.

**2.3** Any animal showing signs of injury, illness or disability not necessitating immediate slaughter, should be as far as possible be isolated pending veterinary attention or humane slaughter.

**2.4** Blind, lame and severely deformed/injured or otherwise unsound livestock shall not be put up for sale at a sale yard or vending site. However, if an animal is injured on the way to or at the sale yard or vending site, or in extremis, it shall be removed and humanely destroyed as quickly as possible. If moving it from the vehicle or the lairage may cause it further suffering, it must be destroyed on the vehicle or in the lairage.

**2.4.1** Only competent persons with the correct equipment shall be allowed to euthanize livestock and a contactable veterinarian shall be identified to provide guidance where necessary

**2.4.2** The method and equipment used shall be appropriate to the species in accordance with the OIE *Terrestrial animal health code*.

**2.4.3** Any person who euthanized any livestock shall remove or cause it to be removed as soon as possible taking into account the applicable by-laws and relevant national legislation.

**2.5** No livestock shall be slaughtered at sale yards or vending sites except for humane reasons.

**2.6** Tail-docking, castration or chipping of the teeth shall not take place at any sale yard or vending site.

**2.7** Emergency contacts for the local appropriate animal welfare organization shall be available.

### **3 Handling**

**3.1** Persons handling livestock shall:

- a) comply with all relevant national standards and legislation;
- b) be trained and competent to work with livestock and have a basic understanding of livestock behavior;
- c) be competent and trained in the handling of each specific species and their handling facility;
- d) use species-specific general aids for the handling of livestock;
- e) act responsibly to prevent injury or unnecessary stress to livestock;
- f) observe, record and report abnormal behavior, illness and injury and use a restraining facility or equipment (or both) where applicable.

**3.2** When livestock are moved their natural herding tendencies shall be utilized and excessive force shall be avoided.

**3.3** Livestock shall be handled in a calm, quiet and effective manner. Shouting, hitting, tail twisting, kicking, unnecessary chasing and beating of livestock shall not be allowed.

**3.4** Livestock shall not be lifted, carried or dragged by the head, ears, horns, skin, fleece, tail or legs.

**3.5** Livestock shall not be thrown, dropped or allowed to jump from any vehicle onto the ground.

**3.6** Mixing of livestock from different origins and different species shall be avoided.

**3.7** When un-weaned livestock arrive at a sale yard, their immediate requirements shall be assessed, taking into account the length of time they have been travelling and the time since they were last fed. Milk or a suitable substitute shall be provided where necessary.

**3.8** Appropriate handling equipment shall be used in accordance with the class of livestock.

**3.9** No instruments or objects, such as whips, sticks, metal pipes or bars, which can cause injury, shall be used. Only white polythene pipes or bags and pig boards should be used.

**3.10** Livestock shall not be struck or pressure applied to any particularly sensitive part of the animal's body in order to move it.

**3.11** Livestock shall not be struck or prodded for the purpose of public display or exhibition to potential buyers.

**3.12** Battery operated prodders and rechargeable prodders may only be used for cattle, provided that the shocks are intermittent and not applied to any sensitive part of the body, such as the face or genitals.

**3.13** Prodders shall not be used on pigs, sheep, goats, un-weaned calves, horses, donkeys, mules or ostriches.

**3.14** Livestock should only be handled in handling pens, body clamps and scales and in

races that are specifically designed for the specific species concerned. Livestock in a race should be separated at regular intervals to prevent trampling.

**3.15** Livestock shall be separated into adults and off-spring of the specific species when handled in a race.

**3.16** Considering that livestock arriving at sale yards and vending sites will experience some degree of stress due to unaccustomed levels of noise and activity, handlers shall exercise patience and consideration during handling, loading and off-loading. Failure to do so could seriously affect the subsequent behavior of the livestock during transportation.

## **4 Loading and off-loading**

**4.1** Loading and off-loading shall be carried-out in accordance with the Code for Transport and Handling of Livestock.

**4.2** The personnel responsible for moving and handling such livestock shall have the required knowledge and skill and should be identifiable.

**4.3** Livestock shall be loaded and off-loaded as quickly as possible and with minimal physical handling, prodding or undue stress.

**4.4** The vehicle shall be lined up flush with the loading/off-loading ramps or banks, so that there is no gap into or through which the animal could accidentally fall or escape or which is likely to cause injury to the animal.

**4.5** Suitable non-slip loading and off-loading facilities, as well as portable or adjustable ramps where necessary shall be provided, with the minimum possible incline.

## **5 Temporary identification and marking**

**5.1** The marking of livestock shall be done in such a manner and with materials, as will not cause distress at the time of marking or thereafter. Only non-toxic paints or aerosols shall be used for temporary marking and shall only be performed by trained personnel.

**5.2** Neckbands or chains, tail bands or leg bands that are used for identification purposes, shall be fitted with care and adjusted as required to avoid any unnecessary pain or distress to the animal.

**5.3** Livestock shall be previously marked in accordance with the relevant national legislation.

**5.4** No permanent identification or marking (e.g. Branding or tattooing) shall be conducted at yards or vending sites.

## **6 Lairage and housing facilities**

**6.1** Facilities shall be suitable for their purpose and their size and the construction shall be adequate for the number of livestock therein and holding pens shall not be overcrowded, i.e. livestock shall be able to lie down. (See Code for the Handling and Transport of Livestock)

**6.2** Appropriate protection from adverse weather conditions such as excessive heat, sun, wind and cold, shall be provided for separated suckling livestock and all pigs.

**6.3** Facilities should be marked for easy identification.

**6.4** Pens, passages and auction rings shall at all times are kept free of foreign matter such as wire, plastic bags, containers, large stones and nails.

**6.5** The floor surface of the auction ring shall be non-slip to prevent livestock slipping and injuring themselves.

**6.6** Broken or damaged rails, wires, fences etc. must be promptly repaired so as to avoid injury.

**6.7** Fittings and internal surfaces of buildings, cubicles, pens, stalls, passages, race areas etc. accessible to livestock shall be designed to ensure the welfare of the livestock.

**6.8** Enclosures shall be secure enough to prevent livestock from escaping.

**6.9** Facilities shall be designed for rapid drainage and to prevent water accumulating in pools. Drains should be constructed to avoid injury to livestock and to ensure efficient drainage from pens and shall be situated so as not to impede the movement of the livestock.

**6.10** Livestock of different species should not be mixed and should be penned in accordance with their size, age and physical characteristics, such as horns or tusks.

**6.11** New facilities, as well as current facilities planned for upgrade shall be properly designed and maintained to assist the movement of livestock. All surfaces shall be non-slip.

**6.12** Facilities shall be adequately cleaned before use.

## **7 Feeding and watering**

**7.1** Fresh potable water shall be available at all sale yards and vending sites.

**7.2** Adequate provision for suitable potable water shall be made for livestock in circumstances where it is necessary and water shall not be denied to any livestock.

**7.3** Adequate troughs of the correct height and construction should be provided to cater for all livestock.

**7.4** No un-weaned livestock shall be kept separated from their mothers unnecessarily. Suckling calves should be fed every 6 h.

**7.5** Adequate provision for suitable food shall be made for livestock in circumstances where it is necessary and no livestock shall be unnecessarily starved or underfed or denied food.

**7.6** The responsible person shall ensure that livestock kept longer than overnight be provided with the appropriate feed for that class of livestock. (Duration of travelling should be taken into consideration)

## **8 Restraining and housing of fractious livestock**

**8.1** Fractious or aggressive livestock (or both) shall be handled with care.

**8.2** Livestock that are hostile to each other on account of their species, gender, age or origin shall be separated from each other.

**8.3** Facilities for restraining or separation of livestock shall be available at all sale yards and vending sites. No fractious livestock shall be tethered.

**8.14** Sufficient crush facilities or enclosures shall be made available to confine livestock for necessary veterinary treatment.

## **9 Roadside vending**

**9.1** Vending operators should carry positive identification of the owner, vendor and livestock offered for sale at any such site or point and such identification shall be produced on demand, subject to the national legislation.

**9.2** Vending permits where applicable shall be obtained from the relevant municipalities and such permits should confirm compliance with this Code.

**9.3** Conditions at permanent and semi-permanent vending sites shall comply with the requirements as for sale yards. Suitable loading and off-loading facilities shall be available.

**9.4** Where vehicles are used as vending points, they shall be parked on a level surface so as not to cause unnecessary distress or discomfort to the livestock.

**9.5** Vehicles used as vending points shall have adequate ventilation and protection or shelter from adverse weather conditions, such as excessive heat and cold. (See Code for the Handling and Transport of Livestock)

**9.6** Vehicles vending poultry shall be constructed in such a manner that the gage floors are solid and food and water are provided in suitable containers. Poultry shall be protected from adverse weather conditions and gages should be clean and not over-crowded.

**9.7** Fractious livestock being transported shall be restrained on the vehicle in such a manner that will safeguard it from unnecessary discomfort or injury and shall be transported separate from other livestock. Protection from adverse weather conditions shall also be provided.

**9.7** Livestock shall be removed from such sites in a humane manner and shall not be dragged or restrained in such a manner so as to cause pain and suffering. Livestock shall only be transported in a vehicle suitable for humane livestock transportation, in accordance with the Code for the Handling and transport of Livestock.