



LIVESTOCK WELFARE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Established 1978

Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee
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POSITION STATEMENT

PERIOD BETWEEN STUNNING & BLEEDING AT ABATTOIRS

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

Presently the Red Meat Regulations of the Meat Safety Act (Act 40 of 2000) provide for an animal to be bled within 60 seconds after stunning, article 74 (1) (a) and (b) This is for all large stock, pigs, as well as for sheep and goats. However, managers as well as operators must be aware that 60 seconds is the maximum length of time that may not be exceeded and all operators and staff must be instructed to commence exsanguination as soon as is feasible after the animal has been stunned.

In many cases and situations it is possible to shorten the 60 second time limit considerably and abattoir owners should consider the provision in the regulations to bleed in a horizontal position, but to bring the animal into 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.

However, international guidelines provide for special precautions when stunning is reversible. The Terrestrial Health Code of the OIE (Chapter 7.5) Slaughter of Animals-item 5) recommend a maximum stun to bleed interval of 20 seconds for both electrical and captive bolt methods.

We therefore advise abattoirs to follow the international guidelines of a stun to bleed interval of 10 to 20 seconds for both sheep, as well as pigs.

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, as well as for the stunning and bleeding operators.

Following literature research by a subcommittee, recommendations have been submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and fisheries on reducing stun-to-bleed times for different species.

**These are as follows:

| RED MEAT | Sheep | Pigs | Goats | Large Stock |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| *Electrical Head Stun | 20 Secs | 30 Secs | 20 Secs | Not Advised |
| Captive Bolt / Penetration Pistol | 60 Secs | 60 Secs | 60 Secs | 60 Secs |
| Electrical Cardiac | Insufficient Research | To be combined with Head | Insufficient Research | Insufficient Research |
| | | | | |

[*Gassing (CO²) is new to South Africa and insufficient research exists to adequately define it; thus, the recommendation should be the same as for Electrical Head Stunning and only applicable to Pigs.]

NFARM

**These recommendations are pending the outcome of the Joint Department of Agriculture Subcommittee charged with researching this subject for amendments to the Relevant Regulations

Adopted: 16 August 2013

Revised: April 2020