

**LIVESTOCK WELFARE
COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

CODE OF PRACTICE

HANDLING AND TRANSPORT OF LIVESTOCK

**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 AND TRANSPORT OF LIVESTOCK

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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 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 AND TRANSPORT OF LIVESTOCK** 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. PENNING OF LIVESTOCK.

1.1 Cattle, sheep, goats, calves and pigs, shall be penned separately.

1.2 Livestock shall not be penned in overcrowded conditions. More livestock shall not be housed in a pen than the permissible number of the particular species for which the particular pen was designed. Penning space provided shall be enough to permit all livestock to lie down at the same time and shall not be less than:

1.2.1 for adult cattle: 1, 74 sq.m of floor area for each individual;

1.2.2 for bacon and small porker pigs, sheep and goats: 0, 56 sq.m of floor area;

1.2.3 for large pigs and young calves: 0, 74 sq.m of floor are;

1.3 Fractious livestock shall not be penned with other livestock.

1.4 Young, weaned juvenile livestock, shall not be penned with adult livestock, except in the case of mother and offspring. If harassed by other livestock, mothers with their young should be penned separately.

1.5 Provisions shall be made in pens for:

1.5.1 facilities such as racks, mangers or other suitable feed containers, which are easy to clean and which can be serviced without disturbing the animals;

1.5.2 water troughs with an adequate supply of potable water at all times;

1.5.3 sufficient facilities for the adequate cleaning of pens;

1.5.4 facilities for the safe and humane keeping and handling of livestock; and

1.5.5 facilities for separate keeping of mothers with their offspring born in transit or in holding pen.

1.6 The pen shall at all times be maintained in a good state of repair: Sharp points such as wire ends, broken boards, jagged ends or protruding hinges or bolts, which could cause injury to livestock, shall be removed or otherwise suitably covered.

1.7 The floor of the entire pen, including the off-loading banks, races, and passages, shall be so constructed as to provide adequate non-slip surfaces that can be efficiently and suitably cleaned and kept dry and in a condition fit for the holding of livestock.

2. HANDLING

2.1 At all times livestock shall be handled with patience and tolerance with due allowance for their natural behavior, e.g.:

* Livestock respond easier to being driven when the drover stands behind the animal but within its field of vision.

* Herd livestock respond easier to being driven when in a group rather than singly;

* Livestock should not be driven in the dark.

2.2 Livestock shall not be dragged by their legs.

2.3 Pigs shall not be lifted or carried by their head, ears or tail.

2.4 Young piglets should be carried if they will not move freely with ease.

2.5 Young calves should be carried if they cannot walk with ease. They may be carried by lifting them around the chest and hindquarters. Alternatively they must be guided with one hand on the hindquarters and the other near shoulder/neck and walked in the required direction at a suitable pace.

2.6 Only sticks with canvas, belting flaps or hollow polythene tubing may be used when driving livestock. It is preferable to strike the ground behind the animal than to hit the animal itself.

2.7 Electric prodders, sticks or goads shall not be used on sheep, pigs, horses, mules, donkeys, goats and un-weaned calves.

2.8 Electric prodders shall not be applied to the face, anal or genital areas of cattle and not only should they not be used excessively or indiscriminately but only as a last resort.

2.9 Livestock shall not be struck in the face.

2.10 The loading, off-loading and herding of sheep should preferably be facilitated by appropriate use of trained "Judas" goats where possible.

2.11 If livestock have to be restrained by hobbling, only the area above the "knee" is to be used.

2.12 Lactating livestock shall be milked when necessary to prevent discomfort.

2.13 Injured, disabled and blind livestock shall be priority slaughtered. If necessary and to prevent further pain or distress, emergency slaughter may be required.

3. MOVEMENT ON THE HOOF

3.1 Livestock driven on the hoof shall at all times be under proper and competent supervision.

3.2 Livestock on the hoof shall be driven in a calm manner at a gait that is relaxed, natural to that animal, and not faster than the pace of the slowest animal.

3.3 Livestock shall not be driven for periods in excess of 10 hours without being given rest of at least one hour and provided with sufficient fresh potable water that will be available to all the livestock.

3.4 No livestock on the hoof shall be moved in excess of the following distances:

3.4.1 during a journey of not more than one day's duration in the case of:

- a) sheep and goats: 20 Kilometers (25 km is excessive) and;
- b) cattle: 30 Kilometers

3.4.2 during a journey of more than one day's duration:

- a) sheep and goats: 20 Kilometers during the first day and 15 kilometers during each subsequent day; and
- b) cattle: 25 Kilometers during the first day and 20 kilometers during each subsequent day.

3.5 Livestock shall be watered and fed immediately on reaching their night camp or final destination, with sufficient food of a quality and of a type compatible with the species.

3.6 No sick, injured, disabled or heavily gravid livestock shall be moved on the hoof.

3.7 Contingency plans shall be in place to move by vehicle any animal that becomes exhausted, lame or otherwise unable to keep up with the herd.

3.8 Contingency plans shall be in place to emergency-slaughter any animal in such a condition that failing to humanely slaughter it, would constitute cruelty: e.g. a broken leg, back or excessive exhaustion.

4. VEHICLES USED IN THE TRANSPORT OF LIVESTOCK.

4.1 All vehicles and trailers shall be roadworthy.

4.2 All vehicles and trailers used for the transportation of livestock shall be designed or suited to the transportation of that specific class of livestock.

4.3 All such vehicles and trailers shall have: -

4.3.1 a suitable non-slip solid impervious floor, which should not impede the cleaning of the floor of the vehicle and also allow for proper drainage. Hinged or removable battens or steel grids are permissible;

4.3.2 adequate ventilation and light whilst in motion as well as when stationary: no vehicle shall be totally enclosed;

4.3.3 adequate protection from exhaust gasses. This might necessitate the rerouting of the exhaust system;

4.3.4 no projections from the floor, sides or roof unless they are adequately protected;

4.3.5 adequate provision for inspection at floor level of all the livestock being transported;

4.3.6 sides and partitions high enough to prevent animals from escaping or falling out of the vehicle: The sides and partitions, when used in a vehicle to separate animals carried therein shall be of a height not lower than the shoulder joint of the largest animal being transported. In the case of cattle other than calves, the minimum height shall be 1800 mm. The minimum height shall be 750 mm in the case of any smaller animals;

4.3.7 in multi-tier vehicles, heights between decks shall be adequate, and in case of sheep and pigs not less than 1000mm, to enable the largest animals to stand naturally, freely and fully erect and to allow adequate space for the free flow of air above the animals;

4.3.8 sufficient partitioning shall be available to compartmentalize the livestock in groups small enough to prevent injuries during transportation;

4.3.9 loading/offloading openings at the rear of the vehicle that are the full width of the vehicle or, if at the sides, a width not less than 2400mm;

4.3.10 gates shall be of a design and construction strong enough and suitable for the conveyance of the intended consignment;

4.3.11 gates must open and close freely and as well as partitions, must be able to be well secured.

4.4 Materials used in the construction of partitions, side-rails, sidewalls, gates and ramps shall be sturdy and suitably robust and not be liable to breakage, splintering or present any surfaces liable to cause injury or bruising to the animals.

4.5 Suitable bedding material of sufficient density and thickness to prevent slipping and sliding is permissible. (Coarse sawdust and wood shavings absorbs urine and wet droppings and give a good footing)

4.6 The density of animals packed into any given space shall be such as to ensure the safety and comfort of the animals during transport, too tight or too loose loading should be avoided. The recommended floor space per animal is as follows:

- 4.6.1 1,4 sq.m per each adult cattle; or
- 4.6.2 0,3 sq.m per small calf; or
- 4.6.3 0,4 sq.m per sheep and goat; or
- 4.6.4 0,3 sq.m per porker; or
- 4.6.5 0,4 sq.m per baconer; or
- 4.6.6 0,8 sq.m per other adult pig.

4.7 In the case of the transport of pigs the vehicles shall have:

- 4.7.1 a free flow of air at a level that will ensure adequate ventilation without subjecting them to wind-chill;
- 4.7.2 adequate protection from direct sunlight at all times;
- 4.7.3 an adequate supply of water for use in an emergency: e.g. spraying to reduce heat exhaustion.

4.8 Where the loading area of a fully loaded vehicle exceeds 4 meters in length, suitable partitions shall be provided so that no single loading area exceeds 3 meters in length.

4.9 The owner shall maintain all vehicles used in the transport of animals in a clean and hygienic condition. The vehicle shall be thoroughly washed down or otherwise cleaned as soon as practicable possible after the animals have been off-loaded.

5. WATERING AND FEEDING OF LIVESTOCK PRIOR TO LOADING.

5.1 The total period of deprivation of water and food commences from the time of the initial loading before the journey and up until off-loading at the destination.

6. LOADING AND OFF-LOADING PROCEDURE

6.1 Pigs from separate pens should not be mixed if this can be avoided. The time between removal from their pens and loading onto the vehicle should be kept to a minimum and the vehicle shall depart as soon as it is loaded.

6.2 Loading and off -loading of livestock into or out of a vehicle shall be accomplished as quietly and calmly as possible, with patience and tolerance and without undue harassment, terrifying of the livestock, bruising, injury, suffering or undue stress.

6.3 No livestock shall be loaded or off-loaded by lifting by head, fleece, skin, ears, tails, horns or legs.

6.4 Livestock should be loaded longitudinally in the vehicle and not transversely

6.5 No livestock shall be loaded or off-loaded otherwise than:

6.5.1 by means of a ramp with a non-slip surface, sturdy enough to support the weight of the species of livestock being handled, with side panels or bars adequate to prevent animals escaping or falling off the ramp and of an incline not steeper than 30 degrees for sheep and goats and 20 degrees for cattle and pigs; or

6.5.2 at a loading bank equal to the height of the floor of the vehicle or, at off- loading, not more than 310mm below the level of the off-loading vehicle and with an incline not exceeding 30 degrees.

- 6.6** Where a truck is equipped with an onboard removable loading ramp it should have a nonslip surface and be of a sufficient length when lowered that the inclination is no steeper than the inclines prescribed in 6.5. The distance from the ground to the heel of the ramp shall not exceed 120 mm.
- 6.7** The vehicle shall be lined up flush with the loading/ off-loading ramps or banks.
- 6.8** Ramps shall be correctly adjusted to the exact height of the vehicle's floor.
- 6.9** Journeys shall commence as soon as possible after the livestock have been loaded and the animals promptly off loaded on arrival at destinations.
- 6.10** Mixing of species: Unless adequate provision has been made for effective separation, different or antagonistic species of livestock such as pigs and cattle, sheep and pigs, cattle and sheep, calves and other species shall not be loaded and transported in the same vehicle.
- 6.11** Mixing of livestock of different ages or sizes: livestock of different ages, sizes and sexes shall not be loaded and transported in the same vehicle unless adequate provision has been made for the effective separation of such livestock.
- 6.12** The mixing of adult horned cattle with polled cattle shall not be allowed and they shall also be penned separately.
- 6.13** No livestock which is diseased, emaciated, injured, disabled, exhausted or otherwise unfit or cows with udders distended with milk, or livestock blind in one or both eyes should be loaded onto a vehicle and transported unless with the purpose to minimize its suffering, and then with the least discomfort.
- 6.14** Where the owner of an animal or his agent, or the consignor, carrier or other person in charge thereof, has reason to believe that the animal is likely to give birth in the course of a proposed journey, the animal may not be loaded onto a vehicle or transported except with the written authority of a veterinary practitioner, and in accordance with the terms and conditions (if any) subject to which authority is given.
- 6.15** Livestock that are blind shall be identifiable by being clearly marked by having a wide circle painted around the blind eye and in addition, a circle not less than 120 mm painted onto both rumps of the animal. The colour of the paint shall be in strong contrast to that of the animal. Livestock blind in one or both eyes shall not be herded together with other livestock but shall be handled separately and guided to their intended destination with due care and consideration for their being unable to respond or react as would normally sighted animals. Where blind animals are off-loaded at an abattoir, such animals shall be the first of their species to be slaughtered.
- 6.16** The following procedures shall not be tolerated:
- 6.16.1** yelling, kicking, tail twisting, beating, whipping, dragging by head, fleece, ears, tails, horns or legs, hitting in the face or elsewhere with bars, rods or sticks;
 - 6.16.2** the excessive or indiscriminate use of any instrument, prod or object used for driving the animal;
 - 6.16.3** applying an electric or battery operated prod to horses, mules, donkeys, pigs, sheep, goats or un-weaned calves;
 - 6.16.4** applying an electric prod to the face, anal or genital areas of livestock;
 - 6.16.5** use of excessive force or attempts to drive livestock into or out of vehicles in such a manner as to cause panic or terror;
 - 6.16.6** carrying any objects or accessories in the load-area of the vehicle which could cause an animal to trip, fall or be bruised or injured;

- 6.16.7** using ramps or platforms that do not provide secure footing;
- 6.16.8** livestock thrown, dropped or allowed to jump from the vehicle onto the ground;
- 6.16.9** transporting livestock in the chest recumbent position except for medical reasons under veterinary supervision;
- 6.16.10** transporting unfit or heavily gravid animals except in an emergency to the animal's benefit under veterinary supervision;
- 6.16.11** loading cows with udders distended with milk.]

7. DISTANCE, DURATION, FEEDING AND WATERING DURING A JOURNEY

- 7.1** Livestock shall not be transported for periods in excess of 18 h. If the journey is longer than 18 h the livestock shall be off-loaded and provided with suitable feed, potable water and shelter.
- 7.2** It must be ensured that adequate time is provided for the loading and off-loading of the livestock within the scheduled time and under competent supervision with sufficient lighting. (All abattoirs shall display the relevant hours applicable prominently)
- 7.3** If un-weaned livestock are transported, they shall be conveyed together with their mothers, each in separate compartments.
- 7.4** If un-weaned livestock should be transported without their mothers, they shall be fed appropriately before and immediately after transportation and the journey time shall not exceed 6 h.
- 7.5** Weaned calves should not be transported for periods in excess of twelve hours

8. Responsibilities of drivers and owners during transport

Drivers and owners shall:

- a)** be in possession of a valid driver's license appropriate to the class of vehicle driven and drive in strict compliance with the requirements of the Road Traffic Ordinance;
- b)** be in possession of all legally required documentation;
- c)** be in possession of a written and approved route plan of the most suitable and shortest route to the destination, a contingency alternate route, as well as a contingency plan for emergencies and the telephone numbers of the consignor, the consignee, the transporters and 24-hour emergency contact numbers;
- d)** have knowledge of the natural behavior and the humane handling of the livestock that are being transported;
- e)** be responsible for ensuring that the load-space of the vehicle is free of any loose or dangerous objects or equipment (wire webbing, spades, spare wheels, drums, tools, etc.) which may cause injury to the livestock being transported therein;
- f)** be responsible for ensuring that there are no rough edges, projecting plates or boards or sharp ends, bent bars etc., which may cause injury to the livestock;
- g)** be responsible for the correct aligning of the vehicle with the loading/off-loading platforms so as to ensure that there is no space through which an animal can fall or be trapped;
- h)** at all times be alert and in a fit state to be in responsible charge of a vehicle conveying livestock;

- i) not handle a vehicle in such a manner as to cause the livestock conveyed therein to slip, fall or be injured. Special care shall be taken when braking and turning the vehicle;
- j) not drive a vehicle in such a manner as to cause undue distress or discomfort to the livestock.
- k) only stop when necessary and park loaded vehicles conveying livestock only on level ground, preferably in shade in a quiet area and for the minimum time possible, not exceeding 30 minutes;
- l) ensure that, barring unforeseen eventualities, the driver is able to deliver the consignment of livestock to its destination within the scheduled time of acceptance. However, be aware of the fact that the faster the vehicle travels the greater the wind-chill factor: The danger of pneumonia and death is greatly increased where the livestock are transported insufficiently protected especially during wet conditions;
- m) not transport livestock under extremely harsh weather conditions;
- n) inspect the livestock that are being transporting as frequently as circumstances may permit, but with not more than 2 h intervals to ensure that no animal is in obvious distress;
- o) be competent to assess such distress and be competent to take the necessary measures to alleviate or resolve the situation;
- p) in the case of livestock giving birth during transport, necessary measures to prevent the mother and offspring from being trampled or otherwise injured or harassed by other livestock shall be taken immediately;
- q) in the case of livestock becoming distressed or severely injured during the course of a journey, such livestock shall be transported to the nearest available place at which it can receive attention, such as a veterinary facility, abattoir, auction pens or Police Station for emergency treatment or humane destruction;
- r) in the event of any breakdown of the transport vehicle or accident, the driver shall seek assistance from the South African Police, the traffic authorities or breakdown service and local animal welfare organization without delay.

9. RESTRAINING OF LIVESTOCK DURING TRANSPORT

- 9.1** No person shall transport any animal which is likely to become panic-stricken or which may try to escape or may be liable to injure any other animal, other than in an escape-proof container. Such containers shall be so constructed as to prevent contamination, to be free from hurtful projections and which shall have adequate ventilation and shade and protection from wind chill, wet or damp and exhaust gasses, so as not to cause such animal undue suffering or distress and which will allow the animal to stand freely and naturally erect with sufficient space above its head to permit free flow of air.
- 9.2** Livestock shall not be transported in a forced recumbent position, except for medical reasons under veterinary supervision.
- 9.3** No animals shall be kept in restraint for more than 4 hours in any 24-hour period.
- 9.4** No animal shall be transported in a sack or in a boot of a vehicle.
- 9.5** Legs and feet of livestock shall not be tied.
- 9.6** A slipknot is not acceptable when tethering livestock to the vehicle by the horns or the neck. The tether shall only be attached to the vehicle at a level not higher than the animal's knees and shall be long enough to allow the animal to lie or stand comfortable in a natural position with the head in an upright position.