



LIVESTOCK WELFARE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Established 1978

Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee
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POSITION STATEMENT

ELECTRO-IMMOBILISATION OF LIVESTOCK

Devices are available that immobilise livestock by passing a small electrical current through specifically placed electrodes that cause spasm in skeletal muscles. Immobilisation may be required to carry out certain procedures safely for both the operator and animal, where untoward or evasive movement may cause pain, injury or damage. Excessive electrical current settings or inappropriate placement of electrodes can cause distress, dyspnoea and even luxations or fractures and death. There is no anaesthesia or diminution of pain whatsoever that results from the use of these devices, and therefore they can never be used as a substitute for anaesthesia or to mask pain that should have been prevented by other means. The use of electro-immobilisers must be limited to those situations where immobilisation is required but not anaesthesia. Operators must be responsible persons (or under responsible supervision) who are aware of the dangers and limitations of these devices; they must be fully trained and only use the devices in situations where they are justified. Devices must comply with proven and authorised specifications regarding electrical current, and devices must be applied for the minimum appropriate time for any given procedure. The class and age of animal must be taken into account and the devices only used on animals where this is appropriate and recommended.

Since there are currently no legally binding regulations in place to ensure correct and acceptable use of these electro-immobilisation devices, the advisability of creating a legal framework in terms of regulations or other guidelines with regulatory authority should be investigated and implemented to protect the welfare of livestock.

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