

Review of Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22nd December 1993 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing.

Views of the Humane Slaughter Association

The Humane Slaughter Association welcomes this review of Directive 93/119/EC. We have some general points on this subject and also some specific ones. These are outlined below.

General points

- (A) One of the problems with the current Directive is that because of its inflexibility it has precluded the use of improved methods that have been developed since the Directive was written. For example, it has precluded the use of a humane and effective percussive stun/kill system developed some 6 years ago for routine slaughter of poultry. We recommend that new legislation should be framed in such a way that it has (i) sufficient flexibility so as not to preclude the development or use of new, improved methods and (ii) sufficient flexibility to allow for detail, relating to the application of new or existing methods for exotic/non-traditional farmed species that are not as yet covered by specific Appendices, to be included as appropriate and timely. Perhaps this could be achieved by drafting the legislation in such a way that the Directive or Regulation is 'enabling' legislation that sets out the framework and makes provision for inclusion of some of the detail in subsidiary legislation that could be updated relatively rapidly to reflect scientific advances or other changing circumstances.
- (B) In addition to building in such flexibility, we strongly recommend that the legislation should include provision for its regular review so that any difficulties arising that might hamper welfare improvements can be dealt with in a timely way.

- (C) We recommend that, in drafting this new legislation, the recommendations concerning lairage made by the UK Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) in its report on the ‘Welfare of farmed animals at slaughter or killing - Part 1: red meat animals’, be carefully taken into account.
- (D) We recommend that consideration be given to making provision to allow for prohibition of the use of specific methods or equipment when it has been shown that these fail to meet acceptable welfare standards. At present, there is nothing to prevent the advertising and sale of unsatisfactory equipment for slaughter or killing.

Specific points are listed below, relating to the various sections of the present Directive.

CHAPTER I General Provisions

1. Article 2, point 5 “Stunning”. The HSA believes that this sentence should be modified to include stunning methods that produce a gradual loss of consciousness, since at present it excludes these methods with the definition of “immediate loss of consciousness”. Failure to include this could preclude use of and prevent further research and technological advances in methods that might be entirely humane (causing animals no discomfort, pain or suffering) but which induce a gradual loss of consciousness .
2. Article 2, point 8 “competent authority”. Whilst the Jewish community in the UK has a nominated body (Board of Shechita) that approves and monitors slaughtermen of the Jewish faith who perform religious slaughter, there is no (or no one) religious authority on whose behalf Halal religious slaughter is performed. As far as we are aware this is the situation throughout Europe.
3. Article 4. The HSA believes that an appendix detailing the ideal facilities and their design and layout would prove useful and ensure that all Member States operate with equipment and facilities deemed to be conducive to high standards of welfare and

operating efficiency in abattoirs. For example, curved races to facilitate animal movement into slaughterhalls, prevent balking and therefore also reduce the use of goads.

4. Article 5, point 1. Provisions need to be made in this legislation to cover the slaughter or killing of farmed fish (taxonomically true vertebrate fish, but not animals sometimes loosely referred to as ‘fish’; for example, ‘shellfish’). Where the sentence states “brought into slaughterhouses” will not apply to farmed fish and so this sentence requires re-wording so as not to exclude fish from this Article.
5. Article 5, point 2 religious slaughter where such methods are exempt from Article 5, point 1 (c). The HSA strongly recommends that all animals should be stunned prior to slaughter to preclude any possibility of pain or suffering. If provision for this is not made then, at least, provision should be made to allow Member States to opt out of this exemption from stunning for religious slaughter, should they wish to.
6. Article 6, point 2. Replace the word “place” with “point”. This would ensure equipment would be at hand in the slaughterhall and not elsewhere on the premises that may take longer to get to.
7. Article 7. Para 2. Consider adding that persons employed for slaughtering or killing must have received formal training and must have the relevant qualification(s) for this for the species being handled. By gaining the qualification, it would confirm that the “necessary skill, ability and...knowledge” had been attained through training. This qualification could be a slaughter licence, as in the UK.
8. Any provision for slaughter licences in the new EU directive should specify whether or not private slaughter of one’s own animals for personal consumption requires a licence. It would also be useful if the directive specifies whether or not certain types of specialised equipment designed to stun or kill animals (e.g. hand-held electrical stunners for poultry) require the operator to have a slaughter licence, even when that equipment is used for (non-emergency) private slaughter.
9. Article 9 should not apply to religious slaughter without stunning. That is, all religious slaughter should be carried out in an abattoir. This would allow more control over the slaughter process and should help to minimise the pain and suffering of the animals.

10. Article 12. Consideration should be given to defining the terms “emergency” and “casualty” slaughter cases.
11. Article 13, point 2. The new legislation should include provision for its regular review so that it can be amended and updated to keep abreast of current developments as they occur. (The existing Directive has not incorporated technical and scientific progress since 1993 and no interim reports on the use of certain pieces of equipment have been made). Furthermore, we recommend that the legislation be designed to allow for subsidiary legislation under the main Directive/Regulation that can be used to amend the main directive or regulation as and when necessary. This would be enable the legislation to keep up to date with developments for high animal welfare standards.
12. Article 15. The Commission experts should be able to make unannounced inspections of third countries that intend to or currently export to the Community.
13. Article 18, paragraph 2. If the new legislation becomes a regulation then Article 18, paragraph 1 will become irrelevant but the HSA believes that paragraph 2 should be retained.

ANNEX A

I. General requirements

14. A.I.1. The word “suitable” should be defined in terms of equipment and facilities. (See also the HSA’s point 3 above regarding the need for a new Appendix setting out standards for design and layout of facilities)
15. A.I.3. Add “physical characteristics” to the list. This allows provision for differences in animal attributes; for example, whether animals are horned or polled.
16. A.I.4. As well as cooling animals that might be suffering from hyperthermia, reference should be made to warming animals by appropriate means if they are suffering from hypothermia. (Although the HSA recognizes that hyperthermia is potentially more immediately dangerous than hypothermia.)

II. Requirements for animals delivered other than in containers

17. A.II.1. It is difficult to envisage when it would not be necessary for unloading equipment to have lateral protection. Instead, the first sentence should perhaps read: “Where slaughterhouses have equipment for unloading animals, such equipment must have non-slip flooring and lateral protection.” This means that animals cannot fall off the sides of the unloading equipment. The HSA recommends that where vehicle loading ramps do not have lateral protection themselves, slaughterhouse unloading equipment should provide lateral protection to prevent animals falling off the sides of the ramp.
18. A.II.1. Maximum possible inclines for loading ramps need to be set and need to be species specific (consistent with Transport Directive).
19. A.II.2. Change second from last sentence to: “Animals must not be lifted by the head, horns, ears, feet, tail or fleece so as not to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering, unless not doing so in an emergency would put the welfare of the animal at a greater risk, and cause the animal greater pain and/or suffering.”
20. A.II.3. The HSA suggests that the fourth sentence of this paragraph be changed to preclude the use of electric shocks on a routine basis and to preclude their repeated use.
21. A.II.4. Change sentence to: “Blows and kicks must not be inflicted to any part of the body.”
22. A.II.9. Change “moderate” to “appropriate” or “suitable”.

III. Requirements for animals delivered in containers

23. A.III.1. Add to end of paragraph: “Containers should always be stored (i.e. in lairage) or carried in their correct, intended orientation so the animals within are appropriately orientated.”
24. A.III.2. Modify second sentence to: “Where appropriate, animals must be **carefully** unloaded from the containers individually.”

ANNEX B

- 25. B.1. Modify sentence to “Animals must be restrained **upright** in an appropriate manner...”.
- 26. B.2. Set maximum times that poultry can be suspended and these must be species specific. According to WASK, “no bird is suspended for more than 3 minutes in the case of a turkey or 2 minutes in other cases before being stunned or killed”. If rabbits are suspended, limits should be set for these also.

ANNEX C

I. PERMITTED METHODS

- 27. C.I.A.4 & C.I.B.3 Change “Exposure to carbon dioxide” to “Exposure to appropriate controlled atmospheres”.
- 28. C.I.A. 1 & 2. There is no need for a separate heading “Captive bolt pistol” since this comes under the heading “Concussion” as it is a concussive stunning method. One heading ‘Concussion (including captive bolt)’ avoids ambiguity.
- 29. C.I. B.1. Change heading to “Free projectile (s), including shot gun”.
- 30. C.I.B. Add a heading on “Concussive killing” as captive bolts are used on neonates and poultry.
- 31. C.I.C. The HSA recommends that decapitation without prior stunning is not listed here as brain activity may continue for up to 30 seconds and it is doubtful that animals are rendered immediately unconscious by this method.
- 32. C.I.C. Research has shown that dislocation does not consistently concuss the brain and is unlikely to cause immediate loss of consciousness. The HSA therefore recommends that dislocation is not used for the routine slaughter of animals, but only for emergencies or for very small numbers of individuals where better methods are not available. We recommend that the new legislation incorporates this advice. Dislocation of the neck must be accompanied by severance of the spinal cord and blood vessels in the animal’s neck.
- 33. C.I.C. The HSA recommends strongly that animals should not be killed by exposure to vacuum. More humane methods are available.

II. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STUNNING

- 34. C.II.1(a). Update to cover other bovine species, as well as domestic cattle. There is currently concern for the welfare of other bovine species at stunning, for example water buffalo. In these species, the morphology of the head is different to domestic cattle and shooting in the frontal position may not consistently produce an effective stun in these animals. Refer to the HSA's General Point (A) for further discussion.
- 35. C.II.2. Change "Concussion" title to "Non-penetrating concussion".
- 36. C.II.2 (a) We suggest that, from the animal welfare viewpoint, consideration is given to deletion of "without fracture of the skull" as this may be impossible to achieve. Fracture of the skull does not pose a welfare problem as long as the animal has been stunned in the correct position and has become immediately insensible. However, we accept that in the wording of this clause the authorities may wish to take account of possible risks to human health arising from dissemination of TSE infected brain emboli.
- 37. C.II.2 (b). Substitute "non-mechanical" for "manual".
- 38. C.II.3.A.2(a). Remove this sentence and instead specify the minimum electrical parameters required to produce an effective stun in all animals of each specified species.
- 39. C.II.3.B.2 Specify the minimum electrical parameters required to produce an effective stun in all animals of each specified species.
- 40. C.II. 5. Delete "If necessary" and clarify what the manual back up should be.
- 41. C.II. 4. Change title to "Exposure to appropriate controlled atmospheres".
- 42. C.II. 4 This section needs to be rewritten to include provision for improved methods to be added (perhaps through subsidiary legislation) as and when such improved methods (after proper evaluation) become available.

III. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR KILLING

- 43. III. 1. Add "shotgun" to the title.
- 44. III. 2. As stated in HSA point 31, decapitation is not a humane method of killing and it should be prevented by the new legislation. As stated in HSA point 32 (above)

dislocation should not be used for routine killing of poultry but only in emergencies or for very small numbers of birds where no better method is available.

45. III. 3. Change “carbon dioxide” to “appropriate controlled atmospheres”.

46. III. 4. The HSA recommends strongly (see HSA point 33 above) that animals should not be killed by exposure to vacuum. More humane methods are available.

ANNEX D

47. D.1. It should be specified that animals should be stuck without delay. In addition maximum stun-to-stick times must be set appropriate for each species and stunning method. The HSA recommends that either both carotid arteries must be severed or a thoracic chest stick must be used in order to produce a rapid bleed out and reduce the risk of animals recovering consciousness before death supervenes.

ANNEX E

48. Delete ‘for example, captive bolt’.

ANNEX F

I. Permitted methods

49. F.3. This should make clear that electrocution with cardiac arrest is acceptable only with effective electronarcosis. That is, only if the animal is previously or simultaneously stunned to prevent its experiencing pain from the fatal electrocution itself.

50. F.5. We recommend that enquiries are made about the aversiveness of chloroform as we suspect that less aversive gaseous anaesthetic agents are available and would be preferable.

51. F.6. Change to appropriate controlled atmosphere stunning.

II. Specific requirements

52. F.II.1 (a). Change “cerebral cortex” to “brainstem” since this is the part of the brain that needs to be destroyed in order to cause death.
53. F.II.2. Substitute “immediate” with “non-aversive”.
54. F.II.3. The HSA questions the use of the technique applied to foxes and the amperage suggested, as being a humane method of killing them.
55. F.II.5. As at HSA point 50 (above), we recommend that enquiries are made about the aversiveness of chloroform as we suspect that less aversive gaseous anaesthetic agents are available and would be preferable.
56. F.II. 6. Change title to “Exposure to appropriate controlled atmospheres”.
57. F.II. 6 (b). The HSA requests that this entire point be deleted and in fact prevented by the legislation since this method of killing is not considered humane.

ANNEX G

I. Permitted methods for the killing of chicks

58. G.2. Change title to “Exposure to appropriate controlled atmospheres”.
59. Under the assumption that this refers to dislocation of the neck, the HSA cannot recommend this as a routine killing method and should only be used in emergencies and for very small numbers of chicks where no better method is available. The HSA therefore recommends that this should be written into the legislation to prevent potential pain and suffering that could result from this method.

II. Specific requirements

60. G.II.1 (a). It does not seem to be relevant to mention what the equipment is made of. It would be useful to add these sentences from the HSA’s *Code of Practice for the Disposal of Chicks in Hatcheries* 2nd Edition booklet: “The drop into the device must be kept to a minimum. If a ‘crushing’ design is used, the gap between the rollers or side projections (i.e. the area through which the chicks are crushed) must be less than 10mm. The rollers should not be forced apart by the chicks.” (A copy of this HSA Code of Practice is enclosed).

61. Point 2. Change to “Exposure to controlled atmospheres”.
62. Point 2 (a). The HSA believes this should be updated to reflect modern understanding of the use of controlled atmosphere methods.