

Review of Council Directive EC 93/119 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing

Submission by Animals' Angels

I. Introduction

Protection of animals and slaughter or killing of animals is a contradiction in terms. Whoever kills an animal causes it the greatest harm possible. There is no way of changing this. When people knowingly subject animals to stressful and unusual conditions and finally wilfully cause their death, it is people's ethical obligation to – at the very least - reduce the pain and suffering of the animals as far as possible. Numerous investigations have proved that in most slaughterhouses there are deficiencies that lead to further unnecessary and avoidable pain and suffering of animals. It has to be assumed that the current Directive has been insufficient to ensure its aim of protection of animals. A revised Community legislation therefore clearly has to be tightened up.

Animals' Angels' comments are mainly based on our observations and experiences at slaughterhouses in different EU Member States and in countries outside Europe, where for several years we have been witnessing deficiencies at slaughterhouses regarding general handling and treatment, unloading, moving, lairaging, stunning and slaughter processes together with deficiencies in the facilities. Furthermore, our comments are based on the 2004 Report and Opinion by EFSA: Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare on the Welfare Aspects of the main systems of stunning and killing the principal commercial species of animals. On many points we follow and support the opinion of Compassion in World Farming (Review of Council Directive 93/119 EC on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing, Submission by CIWF, September 2006).

II. Comments

1) Council Directive substituted by a Regulation

In order to avoid the differences and difficulties of transposition of Community legislation at national level and in order to achieve harmonised legislation within the European Community the minimum requirements for the protection of animals at the moment of slaughter or killing should be laid down by a (Community) Regulation. The Member States should be allowed to adopt stricter rules.

2) Guides to good practice

The revised Directive/Regulation should include the requirement of guides of good practice to be drawn up at a national level, among a number of Member States, or at Community level.

3) Personnel at slaughterhouses

The revised Directive/Regulation should stipulate

- that all operators handling animals at a slaughterhouse - not only personnel involved with restraining, stunning and slaughter - but also the personnel in charge of lairaging, moving, feeding and monitoring animals must attend a training course and be examined in order to receive authorization that permits working at a slaughterhouse
- that persons working at a slaughterhouse must show a positive attitude towards the welfare of the animals
- the possibility of withdrawal of the authorization to work at a slaughterhouse in the event of an infraction of legislation on the protection of animals by the operator
- that piecework is forbidden at slaughterhouses

It has been observed that many deficiencies regarding the protection of animals at slaughterhouses can be put down to the fact that the personnel are not adequately trained. A slaughterhouse should not be a place for cheap and untrained workers. Slaughterhouse operators should be trained and

checked on regularly in order to keep them informed of new findings and technology and to avoid them becoming blunted and blind to deficiencies.

Piecework at slaughterhouses is not in accordance with article 3.¹

4) Animal Welfare Officer

The revised Directive/ Regulation should require

- the operators at a slaughterhouse to appoint a named member of the staff to be responsible for adherence to the welfare requirements of the Directive/Regulation and any which are relevant to good practice.

5) Presence of the trained slaughterhouse personnel during all unloading operations

The revised Directive/ Regulation should stipulate that

- animals may not be delivered during the absence of trained slaughterhouse personnel
- trained slaughterhouse personnel have to monitor or carry out unloading

Animals' Angels observed that animals were regularly delivered to a slaughterhouse while no personnel of the slaughterhouse were on the premises. On one occasion we observed that a sick animal was delivered to a slaughterhouse outside the normal opening hours of the slaughterhouse. The animal collapsed shortly after its delivery to the slaughterhouse.

6) Monitoring of unloading operations, movement, lairaging, restraint, stunning, slaughter or killing, articles 3, 8

The revised Directive/ Regulation should stipulate that

- The areas of unloading operations, movement, lairaging, restraint, stunning, slaughter or killing are regularly monitored by **official** veterinarians
- In addition to the physical presence of official veterinarians in the areas of unloading, movement, lairaging, restraint, stunning, slaughter or killing, video cameras are installed in these areas in order to give the authorities the possibility of permanent supervision.

The slaughterhouse inspections should be carried out by official veterinarians because they are commercially independent of the slaughter industry. Since official veterinarians cannot be continuously on the slaughterhouse premises there should be video control at all times.

7) Prohibition of slaughter of pregnant animals

The revised Directive/Regulation should prohibit the slaughter of pregnant animals.

8) Religious slaughter, article 5 paragraph 2, Annex B second part of paragraph 1

The revised Directive/Regulation should repeal the current exemption that allows religious slaughter without pre-stunning.

In the revised Directive/Regulation, article 5 paragraph 2; Annex B second part of paragraph 1 should be deleted.

Religious slaughtering without pre-stunning is unsatisfactory. It cannot ensure that the pain and suffering of the animals is reduced as far as possible. Therefore the revised Directive/Regulation cannot authorise slaughter without pre-stunning.

¹ All articles quoted without mentioning the law refer to Council Directive 93/119

9) Exceptions according to article 5 paragraph 3

In the revised Directive/Regulation, Article 5 paragraph 3 should be deleted.

10) Inspection and controls, article 8

The revised Directive/Regulation should specifically list the duties and obligations of the relevant authority carrying out slaughterhouse checks.

(As is anticipated, for example, by Regulation 854/2004, Annex I, Section I, Chapter II and Annex I, Section II, Chapter IV.)

11) Infractions and sanctions: responsibility

The revised Directive/Regulation should lay down

- A list of infractions and the corresponding sanctions
- The list of infractions has to include the current article 3.

Furthermore, the revised Directive/ Regulation should lay down the responsibilities of the operator of the slaughterhouse.

12) Transport of injured or diseased animals for slaughter

Chapter III, Slaughter and killing outside slaughterhouses/ Transport of injured or diseased animals, article 12

In the revised Directive/Regulation, article 12 should be more precise and adapted to the requirements of Council Regulation EC no. 1/2005:

The current wording of article 12 gives too much space for interpretation:

"Injured or diseased animals must be slaughtered or killed on the spot. However, the competent authority may authorize the transport of injured or diseased animals for the purpose of slaughter or killing provided that such transport does not entail further suffering for the animals."

Experience has shown that article 12 is often poorly interpreted by the authorities responsible and by farmers, transporters and slaughterhouse operators since severely injured, ill and animals that are not capable of walking, even, are regularly transported.

The revised version of article 12 therefore must clearly state that:

- Injured or diseased animals must be slaughtered or killed on the spot. Exceptions can only be permitted for **animals which are obviously only slightly injured or diseased AND when the transport does not entail further suffering for the animal.**
- the transport has to be authorized by the veterinary authority responsible
- the certificate of authorization has to be carried during transportation to the slaughterhouse
- in no case may an animal be transported when they are considered as not fit for transport according to Annex I, Chapter of Regulation EC 1/2005
- the appropriate authority should make sure that the slaughtering/ killing outside the slaughterhouse is carried out exclusively by skilled and trained personnel.

13) Unloading of the animals as soon as possible after arrival,

Annex A, Part I General requirements, paragraph 2

In the revised Directive/ Regulation, Annex A, Part I, paragraph 2 should be stricter. The revised Directive/ Regulation should stipulate that

- animals must be unloaded as soon as possible after arrival., at least within the **two hours** following their arrival.

14) Transport of injured or diseased animals within slaughterhouses

Annex A, Part I. Requirements for the movement and lairaging of animals in slaughterhouses, paragraph 6

In the revised Directive/Regulation the exception that animals may be transported on a trolley or movable platform to the place of slaughter has to be deleted

The current wording of no. 6 of Annex A, I. is *"...animals which have experienced pain or suffering during transport or upon arrival at the slaughterhouse, and unweaned animals, must be slaughtered immediately. If this is not possible, they must be separated and slaughtered as soon as possible and at least within the following two hours. Animals which are unable to walk must be killed where they lie, or where it is possible and does not entail any unnecessary suffering, transported on a trolley or movable platform to the place of emergency slaughter"*

The second part of the last sentence - *or where it is possible and does not entail any unnecessary suffering, transported on a trolley or movable platform to the place of emergency slaughter* - has to be deleted as, in reality, it is not possible to load or to move a heavy animal such as, for example, a pig, a cow or a horse on a trolley or a platform without dragging or pulling them. Regulation EC no. 1/2005 prohibits dragging or lifting animals by their head, ears, horns, legs, tail or fleece. Actually we have never observed an animal being transported on a trolley or movable platform to the place of slaughter and slaughterhouse operators declared stated that they have never done so. However, we have observed animals being dragged by their legs, heads, horns and tails on the forks of fork-lifts or dragged by tractors across the floor. This has to be stopped without allowing any exceptions.

15) Angles of loading ramps

Annex A, Part II Requirements for animals delivered other than in containers, paragraph 1

In the revised Directive/Regulation the requirements about the angles of the (un)loading ramps enumerated in Regulation EC 1/2005 should be added to point 1 of the annex A, II.

Annex I, Chapter III, point 1.1.4. a: *"Ramps shall not be steeper than an angle of 20 degrees, that is 36.4 % to the horizontal for pigs, calves and horses and an angle of 26 degrees 34 minutes, that is 50% to the horizontal for sheep and cattle other than calves. Where the slope is steeper than 10 degrees, that is 17.6% to the horizontal, ramps shall be fitted with a system, such as provided by foot battens, which ensure that the animals climb or go down without risks or difficulties."*

16) Animals must not be lifted by the head, horns, ears, feet, tail or fleece

Annex A, Part II Requirements for animals delivered other than in containers, paragraph 2

In the revised Directive/ Regulation point 2. of Annex A, II should be stricter.

The current wording of no. 2 of Annex A, II is *"... Animals must not be lifted by the head, horns, ears, feet, tail or fleece in such a way as to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering..."*

The second part of this sentence: *"in such a way as to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering"* should be deleted. It should simply be forbidden to lift animals by any parts of their bodies.

In an adequately equipped slaughterhouse, with appropriate unloading facilities, passageways, flooring, boxes etc. and adequately trained personnel there is no need to lift animals by parts of their bodies.

17) Instruments that administer electrical shocks must not be on sick or injured animals

Annex A, Part II. Requirements for animals delivered other than in containers, paragraph 3

In the revised Directive/ Regulation, point 3 of the annex A, II should be stricter and more precise regarding the use of instruments that administer electric shocks.

It has to be clearly stated that electric shocks may not be used on sick or injured animals or any that suffer from any bodily ailments.

Animals' Angels have too often observed electric goads used on downer cattle and severely ill or injured animals. This is still a common practice and this has to be stopped.

18) Bedding

Annex A, II. Requirements for animals delivered other than in containers, no. 7

In the revised Directive/ Regulation, paragraph 7 of the Annex A, Part II should be stricter and stipulate that

- an adequate amount of bedding material is supplied for all animals kept in lairage overnight.

The addition "where necessary" should be deleted. The possibility of exception is inappropriate.

19) Space allowances for animals kept in lairage,

Annex A, Part II Requirements for animals delivered other than in containers

In the revised Directive/Regulation Annex A, Part I, paragraph 10 should be more precise and stricter. The revised Directive should stipulate

- minimum space allowances for all species of animals kept in lairage in the slaughterhouse
- all animals kept in lairage must have sufficient space to lie down and to reach the watering devices

20) Milking of lactating females

The revised Directive/Regulation should stipulate that lactating females (not accompanied by their offspring) shall be milked at intervals of not more than 12 hours.

As regards this, the revised Directive/ Regulation should agree with Regulation EC 1/2005.

21) Unloading of animals delivered in containers

Annex A, Part III Requirements for animals delivered in containers

The revised Directive/ Regulation should lay down

- a maximum time after which animals delivered in containers have to be unloaded for slaughter
- This maximum time may not exceed three hours

Chickens and rabbits are mainly affected. They are transported in cages, one above the other and one next to the other. Apart from the fact that it is technically impossible to feed and water them in the cages, the air circulation is very bad and often the animals cannot sit or stand in a natural upright position. There is no possibility of excrement being absorbed, it just falls from the upper cages down onto the animals under them.

22) Stunning methods, article 2, paragraph 5, Annex C

The revised Directive/Regulation should only permit appropriate stunning methods that do not entail suffering, pain or stress for the animals.

In order to be appropriate for the protection of animals, stunning has to fulfil the following 4 requirements: 1. The animal has to be put into a condition of total insensibility – and total loss of perceptive faculty. 2. This condition has to last until the death of the animal. Regaining consciousness has to be excluded. 3. The condition of total unconsciousness has to be achieved rapidly. 4. Before rendering the animal unconscious, especially during preparation of the stunning, no suffering or pain may be caused.

The currently allowed and common stunning methods are – in practice – not sufficient to avoid suffering, pain and stress to the animals.

From the point of view of the protection of the animals a stunning methods that leads – independent of the bleeding - to the death of the animal would be desirable.

23) Maximum times between stunning and bleeding

The revised Directive/ Regulation should lay down maximum times between stunning and bleeding.

24) Continuation of the slaughter process only after complete bleeding

The revised Directive/Regulation should stipulate

- minimum times required for complete bleeding for each species
- that the further slaughter process may only be continued when the bleeding is completed

On various occasions Animals' Angels have observed the further slaughter process being started - for example, the legs being cut before the bleeding was completed and the animal was definitely dead. Regarding poultry, we observed broilers entering the de-feathering process alive.

25) Mobile slaughter units

The revised Directive/ Regulation should encourage and make provision for mobile slaughter units.

Mobile slaughter can be a system that promotes animal welfare since it spares the animals the transportation plus the stay at a slaughterhouse. As the system is a way of reducing suffering for the animals it should be included in the revised Directive/ Regulation.

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