

Issues to be considered during the revision of the directive 93/119/EC on animal welfare at slaughter

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Stunning and killing methods

New scientific studies have been undertaken since 1993. The new directive should be describing in details the new process allowed for stunning/killing. Attention should be particularly paid to methods using gas and control atmosphere systems (poultry).

Welfare indicators

A lot of scientific teams from different countries are working to provide welfare indicators (ex: Welfare Quality UE project). Those indicators are mostly developed for experimental purposes or to be used in farms. Few indicators are developed to be used in slaughterhouses. It seems very important that the future directive can deliver guideline with simple indicators, that can be easily used by industrials and official inspectors, in order to assess animal welfare during movement, lairaging, restraint, stunning, slaughter and killing. It will be very helpful if the article 3 of the directive 93/119/EC saying "Animals shall be spared any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering" could be précised. It could tell how "pain and suffering" can be assessed at the slaughterhouse? Indicators recognised by the international scientific community could be included in order that industrials can assess whether or not the current or the new proposed processes are acceptable and efficient.

On farm killing for disease control

Considering the increasing necessity to kill flocks on farm site (Salmonella, Avian Influenza,...) and the lack of standardized methods, details should be provided on available techniques, considering the last years's experience. Indicators of animal welfare that can be used during stunning and killing when using these methods should be specified. Future directive should underline that non-acceptable methods such as interrupting ventilation, food and water supplies should be specifically forbidden, except in the case of very high pathogenic diseases (most animals die before killing device arrives). Attention should be paid to the risk, for workers, of using these systems.

Religious rites

The absence of stunning in the context of religious rites may seriously compromise animal welfare. Solutions guaranteeing both absence of suffering for animal and religious compliance should be proposed and described in the future directive.