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## **Animal Welfare Operative**

Each abattoir should appoint an appropriate employee to be the Animal Welfare Operative (AWO) responsible for overseeing the unloading, lairaging and slaughter process and to ensure compliance with the standards and legislation.

The Animal Welfare Operative shall attend a training course.

During the operation of the slaughter lines, at least one AWO should be on duty. In small slaughterhouses, an AWO should always be available.

The AWO shall check regularly and record whether the animals are unloaded correctly and are rendered unconscious before slaughter. If the stunning is impaired, the AWO should have to power to stop the slaughter line and make sure remedial actions are taken. In addition, the AWO should have to power to change work descriptions.

The slaughter house must support the AWO in the performance of his tasks and allow him to carry out his duties without restriction. The animal welfare Operative shall not be bound by any instructions when fulfilling his tasks. He may not be discriminated against because of the performance of his tasks. His position and powers shall be laid down by statute, by internal instructions or in a similar form. In the process steps shall be taken to ensure that the animal welfare Operative can voice his proposals or reservations directly before the decision-making body. If several animal welfare operatives are appointed, the scope of duties of each shall be clearly defined.

## Background

The idea to introduce an animal welfare Operative (AWO) is not a new idea.

Bristol University is offering courses for Animal Welfare Operative's already since 1993 and it's proved to be one of its most popular training courses. It's a two-day course devised for personnel with responsibilities for ensuring animal welfare in-plant. In Germany an "Animal welfare responsible", authorised to issue instructions and responsible for compliance with the AW regulations is fixed in the animal welfare act §16 (4a) since 1997 for slaughter plants slaughtering more than 50 large animal units a week (One large animal unit is 1 cattle, 5 pigs or 10 sheep – for poultry these numbers exist in the hygiene regulations. Bsi Schwarzenbek has done several training courses for these people since 1999. International retailers like Tesco accept the bsi training certificate as well as the bristol certificate.

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Also in the field of protection of experimental animals, an Animal Welfare Operative is required for most institutions which conduct studies involving vertebrates. The Animal Welfare Operative performs an internal supervisory role and implements the requirements of the Animal Welfare Law on site.

### Training

To make the training particularly attractive to the industry emphasis could be given to the links between good welfare and good meat quality, and the information on new and impending legislation.

The course should include a mix of background science, current legislative requirements and practical detail. Making use of multimedia presentations good practice could be illustrated.

Discussion groups form an important part of the course allowing delegates to apply the principles to their individual situations. Successful completion should result in a certificate.