



## Animal welfare principles for disease control

### Introduction

Animal Welfare is based on animal *sentience*; the ability of animals to experience feelings eg. pain, discomfort, hunger, thirst, suffering, pleasure, joy, comfort etc. The scientific definition of animal welfare has been debated and evolved over time. The OIE (the World Organisation for Animal Health) has also evolved their definition which now states in the Terrestrial Code; 'animal welfare means the physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies'. The purpose of this technical note is to highlight the existence of OIE resources, obligation of humane killing for disease control, and available technical notes for training.

### Quality of Death

Whilst any society as a whole continues overall to accept that farm animals can be killed for food, there is a responsibility on that society to ensure the process causes no unnecessary pain, injury, distress or suffering. Similarly, when killing animals for disease control.

Historically much of the focus when addressing animal welfare has been on the method of killing. However, from the animal's perspective this may only be the final stressor in a sequence of equally or more stressful events. As well as the moving of animals on farm to present them for killing on farm, they will need to be subjected to handling, penning and possibly inspection before killing.

The welfare of animals during killing for disease control should take into account the whole process and consider the need to contain animals, disease agents and be humane, safe and efficient. Assessment, euthanasia of suffering animals and then considerations for culling should occur in that order. Sick animals should be euthanised without delay, to prevent further suffering and contamination. Stressful conditions and management of animals can increase shedding and spreading of infectious agents. It's in the best interests of disease control to conduct humane practices that include low stress, minimal or efficient animal handling. The process must meet community and international expectations for animal welfare. This will also reduce distress to workers, farmers and staff.

The basic principles that must be observed are:

- Handling methods and facilities which minimise stress
- The use of competent, well trained and caring personnel

- Appropriate equipment that is fit for purpose, effective, reliable
- An effective process that induces immediate unconsciousness and insensibility, or immediate death without distress; and
- A guarantee of non-recovery from that process.
- Confirmation of death before disposal.

The World Animal Protection series of technical notes will cover detail for two of the most practical options for humane killing on farms – captive bolt and 2 stage electrical (stun-kill). It is also essential that humane handling, movement and confirmation of death is assured prior to disposal.

The World Animal Protection technical notes available for killing for disease control include:

1. Animal welfare principles for killing for disease control
2. Pig behaviour and handling for killing pigs on farm
3. Electrical stun-kill method and confirmation of death
4. Mechanical killing (captive bolt) and confirmation of death
5. Further information on slaughter of pigs in disease control situations

The information aligns with the OIE Terrestrial Chapter 7.6 Killing of animals for disease control purposes which can be found [here](#). Key methods for pigs are summarised below.

OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code		
Chapter 7.6 – Killing of Animals for Disease Control Purposes		
Swine Procedures		
Age Range	Procedure	Restraint Necessary
All, except neonates	Free bullet	No
All, except neonates	Penetrating captive bolt, followed by pithing	Yes
Neonates	Non-penetrating captive bolt	Yes
All	2-stage electrical	Yes
All	Single stage electrical	Yes
Neonates	CO <sub>2</sub> /nitrogen/inert gas/mixture	Yes
All	Injection with barbiturates	Yes

A series of webinars specific to African Swine Fever control and prevention are hosted by OIE [here](#)