



**VETERINARY IRELAND**

**POLICY DOCUMENT**

**ON**

**WELFARE OF ANIMALS**

**AT TIME OF SLAUGHTER**

**2019**

**AS RATIFIED BY**  
**VETERINARY IRELAND NATIONAL COUNCIL**  
**21<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2019**



## **Veterinary Ireland Policy Document on Welfare of Animals at Time of Slaughter**

### **SUMMARY**

The welfare of animals is recognised as an important issue by the European Union and the Member States.

Animals should not experience avoidable pain, stress, or suffering. The welfare of animals should be ensured at all times, but especially at the time of killing.

Good welfare standards contribute also to the quality of the meat and to the safety of all who work in slaughterhouses.

When animals are subject to minimum stress, the quality of the meat is enhanced. There is also a better and safer relationship between animals and people.

In 2009, the European Union adopted Regulation (EC) N°1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing. The Regulation aims to achieve good standards of animal protection at the time of killing and related operations. The Regulation lists a number of principles and rules that business operators, animal welfare officers, and slaughtermen need to understand and apply.

Veterinary Ireland calls on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and local authorities with responsibility for slaughterhouses, to facilitate slaughterhouse operators in complying with the Regulation by approving an adequate number of training courses for the issuance of certificates of competence at a fee which is viable for all operators, including those that operate very small throughput slaughterhouses.

Veterinary Ireland calls on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, to further progress the development of meat inspection as a welfare diagnostic tool and address the barriers that are inhibiting its use. These are, amongst others, line speed, standardization and training of meat inspectors and data ownership.



### **EU Council Regulation (EC) No. 1099/2009**

Veterinary Ireland welcomes the introduction by the European Union of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing. This Regulation came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013. Veterinary Ireland notes the animal welfare principle enshrined in Article 3 of the Regulation:

1. Animals shall be spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations.
2. Business operators shall, in particular, take the necessary measures to ensure that animals:
  - (a) are provided with physical comfort and protection, in particular by being kept clean in adequate thermal conditions and prevented from falling or slipping;
  - (b) are protected from injury;
  - (c) are handled and housed taking into consideration their normal behaviour;
  - (d) do not show signs of avoidable pain or fear or exhibit abnormal behaviour;
  - (e) do not suffer from prolonged withdrawal of feed or water;
  - (f) are prevented from avoidable interaction with other animals that could harm their welfare.
3. Facilities used for killing and related operations shall be designed, constructed, maintained and operated so as to ensure compliance with the obligations set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 under the expected conditions of activity of the facility throughout the year.

Veterinary Ireland notes in particular Article 7, Paragraph 1 of the Regulation: "Killing and related operations shall only be carried out by persons with the appropriate level of competence to do so without causing the animals any avoidable pain, distress or suffering."; and the requirement in Article 7, Paragraph 2 that all staff working with live animals in the slaughterhouse must obtain a certificate of competence, to demonstrate their ability to carry out the activities listed:

- (a) the handling and care of animals before they are restrained;
- (b) the restraint of animals for the purpose of stunning or killing;
- (c) the stunning of animals;
- (d) the assessment of effective stunning;
- (e) the shackling or hoisting of live animals;
- (f) the bleeding of live animals;
- (g) the slaughtering in accordance with Article 4(4), i.e. particular methods of slaughter prescribed by religious rites.



Veterinary Ireland also welcomes the requirement for all medium-sized or larger slaughterhouses to appoint an animal welfare officer to assist the slaughterhouse operator in ensuring that the structure and activities within the slaughterhouse are compliant with the Regulation.

1. The animal welfare officer shall be under the direct authority of the business operator and shall report directly to him or her on matters relating to the welfare of the animals. He or she shall be in a position to require that the slaughterhouse personnel carry out any remedial actions necessary to ensure compliance with the rules laid down in this Regulation.
2. The responsibilities of the animal welfare officer shall be set out in the standard operating procedures of the slaughterhouse and effectively brought to the attention of the personnel concerned.
3. The animal welfare officer shall hold a certificate of competence as referred to in Article 21, issued for all the operations taking place in the slaughterhouses for which he or she is responsible.
4. The animal welfare officer shall keep a record of the action taken to improve animal welfare in the slaughterhouse in which he/she carries out his/her tasks. This record shall be kept for at least one year and shall be made available to the competent authority upon request.

**Veterinary Ireland calls on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and local authorities with responsibility for slaughterhouses, to continue to implement these and all other provisions of the Regulation, and to facilitate slaughterhouse operators in complying with the Regulation by approving an adequate number of training courses for the issuance of certificates of competence at a fee which is viable for all operators, including those that operate very small throughput slaughterhouses.**

**Veterinary Ireland calls on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, to further progress the development of meat inspection as a welfare diagnostic tool and address the barriers that are inhibiting its use. These are, amongst others, line speed, standardization and training of meat inspectors and data ownership.**



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