

IVSAH Guidelines for Humane Kosher Slaughter

A. Background

The objectives of the following requirements for the humane kosher slaughter of animals address the need to ensure that the treatment of animals during the induction of death is as humane and respectful as possible. Good animal welfare in slaughterhouses addresses aspects of humane handling and humane slaughter or killing, in order to ensure the welfare of food animals during pre-slaughter and slaughter processes, until they are dead.

Conducting slaughter without stunning while maintaining adequate levels of welfare requires skill and attention to the details of the procedure compared to slaughter with stunning. For this purpose, both skilled people and well-engineered equipment are needed in the slaughterhouse.

B. IVSAH Requirements

I. Rotating Restraint Box

The IVSAH requires from all establishments exporting meat to Israel to use a **rotating restraint box** for slaughter of animals intended for Israel. The device will invert an animal from an upright position onto its' back, thus facilitating a downward cutting stroke. Shackling and hoisting, shackling and dragging, and leg-clamping boxes are forbidden, and suspension of live animals by their legs is not permitted.

A. Stress reduction in the Rotating restraint box:

1. Rotating restraint box inverts the animal onto its back. It must have adjustable sides that support the animal and its body from slipping, twisting, shifting position, or falling when the box is rotated.
Rotating box with no adjustable side to provide optimal body support is not acceptable. The animals will be immobilized completely during inversion.
2. The rotating restraint box must have **pressure-limiting devices** on all parts of the device that press against any part of the animal for preventing the application of excessive pressure.
3. The Rotating restraint box in addition to its moving parts should move with smooth steady motion, without sudden jerky motion.
4. The use of the rotating restraint box should take into account the individual **optimum pressure** for it to operate. The establishment will ensure that the device applies optimal pressure, thus enough pressure for the body to be held securely and supported, preventing struggling and slipping within the device or vocalization.
5. The rotating restraint box flooring as well as the lead up race will be nonslip flooring, not to trigger fear of falling.
6. Animals' vision of people, moving equipment, and activity on the floor should be blocked as to preventing balking and improve ease of entry into the restraint device.
7. The Rotating restraint box is of an appropriate size for the animals being processed. Animals must not be able to turn around in the box.
8. The slaughter area should be sufficient to enable staff to observe, inspect and access the animals throughout the bleeding period.

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B. Operating the Rotating Restraint Box:

1. Maintain slaughter area clean during operation.
2. Cattle that fight restraint are more likely to have prolonged sensibility; gentle operation of restraint devices facilitates rapid loss of sensibility.
3. Since head restraint is more aversive to the animal than body restraint, slaughter of cattle will occur **within 10 seconds** after their heads are restrained in the neck yoke.
4. Incision of both carotid arteries (at the very least) will be performed. In case of false aneurysms (formation of blood clots occluding the severed arteries), the incision should be deepened in order to prevent unnecessary prolonged periods of consciousness. Touching or palpating the incision area is painful, therefore forbidden.
5. Reduce the pressure applied by the head holders (but do not remove it), rear pusher gates, and other devices immediately after the throat cut to promote rapid bleed out.
6. The time passed from the incision and up to the animals' complete release from the box (head and body) will be **no less than 30 seconds**.
7. Animals' release from the restraint box will be carried out in a smooth, gliding motion onto an elevated table or platform, without falling since loss of consciousness has not been established at this stage.
8. The animal will remain at the above-mentioned table until a skilled worker that was trained particularly for it, will determine unconsciousness. The worker must determine unconsciousness in every animal slaughtered.
9. Unconsciousness is the loss of individual awareness that occurs when the brain's ability to integrate information is blocked or disrupted. Prior to hanging, it is mandatory that all signs of brainstem functions such as the corneal reflex to be absent. Additional indicators of consciousness, which must be absent, are righting reflex, rhythmic breathing, eye tracking, and natural blinking (menace reflex).
10. Even though an animal showing only a corneal reflex is unconscious, to provide a good margin of safety, it should be absent before dressing procedures start, thus determining that the animal is completely insensible, before invasive dressing procedures such as skinning or horn or leg removal are started.
11. Absence of the corneal reflex and complete unconsciousness before dressing procedures are mandatory.
12. Cattle that fight restraint are more likely to have prolonged sensibility. Gentle operation of restraint devices facilitates rapid loss of sensibility.
13. The following methods of restraint are absolutely forbidden for conscious animals that are still sensible.
 - Shackle and hoist and suspension by the leg or legs.
 - Shackle and drag by the legs and then roll the animal onto its back.
 - Trip floor boxes that cause the animal to fall down with the use of a slanted floor or other device.
 - Leg clamping rotating boxes.
 - Hanging animals for bleeding.
 - Any dressing procedures such as horn removal or skinning.

II. Veterinary Control over the Practice of Humane Kosher Slaughter.

The act of kosher slaughter is performed according to the **Dietary Codes** of Judaism, which differ from the **Veterinary Codes**. Kosher slaughter requires throat cutting without stunning, a unique method in which instantaneous unconsciousness **is not induced**, and in some cases, may be prolonged.

IVSAH requires that all countries interested in exporting meat to Israel will have written procedures and instructions regarding the veterinary control over the practice of humane ritual kosher slaughter issued by the Central Competent Authority (CCA). It is the IVSAH recommendation that kosher slaughter CCAs' guidance are addressed by national humane slaughter regulations.

The CCA must provide specific procedures and instructions regarding the veterinary control over the practice of humane ritual kosher slaughter. The procedures must include instructions regarding daily official veterinary verifications on the establishments' program implementation, method of documentation of the verifications, and regulatory actions in case of non-compliances. The official veterinary verifications must insure that the establishment meets all the requirements stated in this document.

The CCA will determine minimum standards for animal welfare, including requirements for inspection of animals before, during, and after their transport, and appropriate certification and record keeping. Standards will be set for facilities, for the competence of animal handlers, drivers, and managers of facilities in relevant issues in animal welfare. The CCA will ensure appropriate awareness, training, implementation of the standards, monitoring, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the standards of welfare.

The Veterinary control should ensure that slaughterhouse staff and animal handlers are competent and carry out their tasks in accordance with the principles of animal welfare.

III. Establishments' Control over the Practice of Humane Kosher Slaughter.

- (1) It is in the responsibility of the establishment to write and implement a plan for animal welfare, which will address general issues of handling and slaughter, as well as issues that are exclusive to the kosher ritual slaughter.
- (2) The plan is mandatory and its implementation requires verifications, monitoring, documentation, and validation as expected from food safety programs.
- (3) The AVMA Guidelines for the Humane Slaughter of Animals: 2016 Edition, and chapter 7 of the OIE Terrestrial Code, in particular, articles 7.5.2 and 7.5.3, will serve as reference guides for the welfare plan. All slaughterhouse operations should comply with Humane Handling requirements.
- (4) The welfare plan should maintain a good level of animal welfare at all stages of the handling of animals until they are dead. The plan will include standard operating procedures for each step of animal handling starting at the loading for transport and up to the stage that the animals are dead, as to ensure that animal welfare is properly implemented based on relevant indicators.

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- (5) The plan should contain objective scoring of animal welfare, and will document the effectiveness of the welfare plan by means of different measurements, such as:
 - Vocalization Scoring by the percentage that vocalize (moo or bellow) during handling and restraint.
 - Electric Scoring by the percentage of animals that move due to the use of an electric goad.
 - Percentage of animals that slip during handling.
 - Percentage of animals that fall during handling.
 - Quantity, type, and location of hemorrhages on the carcasses as an indicator of mis-handling, hitting, or abuse.
 - Other measures.
- (6) The welfare plan should also include specific corrective actions in case of specific risks.
- (7) When an animal welfare problem occurs in the slaughterhouse, the cause of the problem must be determined by a documented investigation. The plan will specify the appropriate corrective and preventive actions, and in which cases performance of re-evaluation of the plan is required.
- (8) IVSAH prohibits abusive practices such as beating animals in any manner, tail twisting or hitting, dragging downed nonambulatory animals; poking sensitive areas such as the eyes, anus, or udder; slamming gates deliberately on animals; deliberately driving animals over the top of a downed animal. The use of electrical prods during handling of animals and walking to slaughter should be minimized.
- (9) The plan will include the followings:**
 - i. Training of employees: It is in the responsibility of the slaughterhouse that animal handlers' employees should be experienced and competent in handling and moving farm livestock, and understand the behavior patterns of animals and the underlying principles necessary to carry out their tasks.

Handlers need to understand behavioral principles such as flight zone and point of balance in order to avoid handling problems that compromise welfare
 - ii. Animal handlers conduct should be calm and quiet. They should refrain from yelling, whistling, or repeatedly hitting the sides of the vehicle\walk.
 - iii. Establish handling recommendations to reduce electric prod use and maintain efficient handling. Electric goads and prods should be minimized, only to be used in extreme cases and not on a routine basis to move animals. The use and the power output should be restricted to that necessary to assist movement of an animal and only when an animal has a clear path ahead to move.

The use of such devices should be limited to battery-powered goads on the hindquarters, and never on sensitive areas such as the eyes, mouth, ears, anogenital region, or belly.
 - iv. Painful procedures (including whipping, kicking, tail twisting, use of nose twitches, pressure on eyes, ears or external genitalia), or the use other aids which cause pain and suffering (including large sticks, sticks with sharp ends, lengths of metal piping, fencing wire or heavy leather belts), are forbidden.

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- v. Establishments' personnel should oversee the off-loading of all cattle to ensure the proper handling of livestock, including downers. If the official policy allows the processing of downers, then proper procedures should be in place to meet all Humane handling requirements.
- vi. Animals should be grasped or lifted in a manner which avoids pain or suffering and physical damage (e.g. bruising, fractures, dislocations). In the case of quadrupeds, manual lifting by a person should only be used in young animals or small species, and in a manner appropriate to the species; grasping or lifting such animals only by their wool, hair, feathers, feet, neck, ears, tails, head, horns, limbs causing pain or suffering is not be permitted.
- vii. The facility constructions and off-loading areas should be of sound condition to prevent injury and allow humane handling practices.
- viii. Automated powered gates must be equipped with pressure-limiting devices to prevent the gate from either knocking animals over or dragging animals along the floor.
- ix. Removal of visual and aural distractions that cause animals to balk and refuse to move.
- x. Conscious animals should not be thrown, dragged or dropped.
- xi. The plan will contain the IVSAH requirements regarding the slaughter of animals with the aid of a rotating restraint box.