



# Domestic Abattoir Animal Welfare Update

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# Presentation Overview

- Domestic Abattoir Review
- Review Findings
- The 10 Recommendations from the Review
- Conclusion

# Animal Welfare Review 2012

The NSW Food Authority conducted a full review of all domestic red meat abattoirs in NSW. This review was conducted:

- To assess compliance with Section 7 of AS 4696:2007 Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption.
- To assess abattoir animal welfare performance against the “Industry Animal Welfare Standards – Livestock Processing Establishments – Preparing Meat For Human Consumption, Second Edition AMIC 2009”.
- To make recommendations on how animal welfare practice can be improved in NSW domestic abattoirs.

At the time of the review there were ten domestic red meat abattoirs licensed and operating in NSW. All ten were reviewed in February and March 2012

# Review Findings

- Non approved operations
- Lack of clarity who has control
- Ineffective stunning – contact times, # first time stuns and suitable restraints
- Inadequate procedures, monitoring of animal welfare in documented programs.
- Different arrangements for out of hours deliveries compared to daytime
- Variable levels of competence/skills in operators. Some abattoirs had good training, some mixed, some had no training.
- Variable levels of management oversight/commitment to animal welfare
- Equipment/facilities not maintained, unserviceable, not suitable.
- Easy entry to slaughter floor and surrounds.

# Recommendations from the Review

- The initial animal welfare review identified a number of improvements required to improve compliance with animal welfare outcomes specified in AS4696:2007.
- Ten recommendations made to the Authority proposed a range of measures to improve animal welfare systems, compliance and regulatory oversight.
- These recommendations were subsequently fully adopted by the Authority and implemented through the domestic abattoirs in NSW.
- In order to assess industry compliance with animal welfare outcomes at NSW domestic red meat abattoirs, a further assessment was conducted in March 2013 (one year after the initial review).
- This further assessment confirmed significant progress has been achieved on implementing improvements to address the recommendations.

# Recommendation 1

*Management oversight & commitment to compliance with the Standard needs to improve dramatically. The Authority should use its existing compliance and enforcement policy on businesses that fail to upgrade their animal welfare standards.*

## Current Position:

- At the time of the 2013 assessment, all businesses had complied significantly with upgrading documented procedures in line with Industry Animal Welfare Standards Livestock Processing Establishments requirements and are ensuring that all staff involved in the business have a commitment to animal welfare and complying with all legislative requirements. Authority audits and inspections have identified these changes within the industry and the Authority will continue to review and assess compliance with this recommendation at future audits.

# Recommendation 2

*Section 7 of AS 4696:2007 Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption is inadequate by itself to assess compliance with animal welfare practices as it is outcome based. Guidance material is urgently required to assist auditors and industry measure compliance in this regard.*

## Current Position:

- Industry Animal Welfare Standards - Livestock Processing Establishments have been adopted as the guide and is now used by the Authority and all NSW domestic abattoirs to improve animal welfare outcomes in livestock handling and slaughtering facilities at abattoirs.

# Recommendation 3

*The Authority should make compliance with the "Industry Animal Welfare Standards – Livestock Processing Establishments – Preparing Meat For Human Consumption, Second Edition AMIC 2009" a legal requirement for all domestic red meat abattoirs.*

## Current Position:

- The NSW Food Authority updated the licence conditions on red meat abattoirs to make it a requirement that the licensee complies with the six key standards outlined in the industry manual. Each abattoir was required to appoint an Animal Welfare Officer to monitor animal welfare at each abattoir, as part of its quality assurance system, by 31 December 2012.
- All operators involved in stunning, sticking and shackling of animals to obtain competency based training in MTM 11 Stun, Stick and Shackle course by 1 July 2013. The majority of abattoirs had completed this training in late 2012, with the remaining licensees on track to finalise the training by 1 July 2013.

# Recommendation 4

*The Authority should require abattoirs to employ staff that have completed a recognised form of animal welfare training. These trained staff should be present at all times the abattoir is operating.*

## Current Position:

- Key supervisory staff involved in livestock handling and slaughtering have completed formal training and dedicated Animal Welfare Officers (AWOs) have been appointed at each abattoir to ensure animal welfare is monitored and dealt with as part of the abattoir quality assurance system. To date all abattoirs have provided this training to multiple staff members to ensure there is always a suitably trained staff member available during processing operations.

# Recommendation 5

*Every person on the premises involved in the handling of live animals, up to the point of death, must have either completed a recognised form of animal welfare training or have been assessed as competent by an appropriately trained person.*

## Current Position:

- It is now a requirement of the Authority licence that all staff members complete mandatory training. All domestic red meat abattoirs now have fully trained AWO's present at all times and the majority of abattoirs have completed MTM 11 training Stun, Stick and Shackle training for their employees. All training will be fully completed by 1 July 2013.

# Recommendation 6

*Inadequate restraint in knocking boxes must be addressed where identified. This may result in significant costs to some businesses but is essential in providing animal welfare at this point in the slaughter process.*

## Current Position:

- Most abattoirs who were issued Improvement Notices to action poor restraint in knocking boxes have introduced control measures to prevent head movement and allow for a compliant, first time stun on cattle. All abattoirs are also monitoring and actioning poor stunning techniques as part of their documented procedures to ensure continual improvement with stunning techniques and outcomes.

# Recommendation 7

*Stunning equipment, particularly electrical systems is old & poorly maintained. The industry needs to be encouraged to invest in some modern equipment.*

## Current Position:

- Agreement has been reached with abattoirs to monitor operations and document procedures that require all electrical stunning equipment be calibrated annually to ensure correct voltage, amperage and frequency is delivered through stunning equipment. There is also now a requirement in procedures for back-up stunner to be available and operational at all times.

# Recommendation 8

*Security in domestic abattoirs needs to be significantly improved.*

## Current Position:

- As at March 2013 there remains one domestic abattoir that does not have CCTV surveillance cameras monitoring movements around the abattoir.
- The majority of domestic abattoirs have also installed CCTV equipment in stickholes and other areas to assist in monitoring operations.
- The Authority is encouraging all abattoirs to install CCTV equipment to assist in monitoring their overall system.

# Recommendation 9

*Five abattoirs at the initial review had unacceptable animal welfare practices. It was recommended that those abattoirs be placed into a performance improvement program with increased unannounced audits and inspections to ensure that the measures addressed by the Improvement Notices are maintained.*

## Current Position:

- All abattoirs were subject to monthly animal welfare inspections between March 2012 and October 2012. After this time the frequency was reduced due to high levels of compliance. Animal welfare inspections were conducted separately to the normal scheduled audit program which requires all abattoirs to receive a full audit annually.
- Animal welfare inspections have shown that all abattoirs are substantially compliant with animal welfare legislative requirements. Minor issues have been identified and the Authority will continue to conduct inspections and liaise with these licensees to ensure that continual improvements are made and all animal welfare requirements are fully compliant.

# Recommendation 10

- *The Animal Welfare checklist developed and used during the inspection program needs to be part of the Authority's assessment system and used by Authority officers when conducting unannounced inspections and audits of abattoirs.*

## Current Position:

- The specialised Animal Welfare checklist is completed by Authority staff at all audits and inspections conducted on abattoirs and it is current policy that this checklist will be continually reviewed to ensure it is still current and able to effectively assess compliance with animal welfare requirements.

# Conclusion

- After one year of implementing measures to improve animal welfare outcomes, the animal welfare inspection program has shown that all abattoirs had substantially addressed the recommendations and taken action to ensure they were compliant with legislative requirements.
- No significant animal welfare issues were outstanding at the completion of this assessment. Some abattoirs were still implementing corrective actions that were delayed due to financial constraints but these relate to minor issues and have no significance to the business's overall ability to appropriately meet animal welfare requirements.
- The follow up animal welfare assessment has found that the programs implemented by the Authority and actions taken by licensed abattoirs have resulted in a significant improvement in animal welfare controls.
- All red meat domestic abattoirs in NSW are able to demonstrate compliance with animal welfare legislative requirements.
- The Authority will continue to conduct animal welfare assessments at abattoirs and identify issues to enable continuous improvement to be achieved.