

Protect the welfare of animals during pithing operations

Overview

This standard is about the skills and knowledge needed for you to protect stunned animals during pithing operations in food manufacture and/or supply operations.

Operating and understanding pithing operations is important to maintaining the safe, hygienic production of meat or poultry, including the maintenance of animal welfare. It is also important to maintaining supply to the meat or poultry production process.

You will need to be able to prepare work area, tools and equipment to protect the welfare of animals during pithing operations. You also need to be able to carry out pithing operations and protect animal welfare, including ovine/caprine and porcine species.

This standard is for you if you work in food manufacture and/or supply operations and are involved in carrying out pithing operations and protecting the welfare of animals.

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

Prepare pithing operations

1. prepare to carry out pithing operations in accordance with organisational standards
2. wear and use personal protective equipment in accordance with regulatory standards and organisational requirements
3. check the condition of pithing rods
4. maintain pithing rods ready for use
5. check the availability and condition of any restraint equipment used
6. check the availability and operation of back-up stunning/killing equipment
7. check that pithing area and personnel are available and ready for receiving livestock
8. refer problems outside the limits of your responsibility to the relevant people

Control pithing operations

9. assess the effectiveness of stunning and take action where stunning has been ineffective
10. check restraint and position of livestock is correct for pithing
11. select and use rods to pith livestock
12. operate in ways which minimise avoidable pain, suffering and distress
13. insert pithing rod and ensure the destruction of the brain function
14. take action to deal with livestock that are not pithed effectively
15. address problems within the limits of your responsibility

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. why it is important to follow organisational standard operating procedures and animal welfare regulations during pithing operations
2. the behavioural characteristics of livestock in pithing operations
3. why it is important to minimise avoidable pain, suffering and distress
4. the expected times to death following effective pithing
5. how to recognise the signs of effective pithing, ineffective pithing, consciousness
6. why the brain should be destroyed to ensure that unconsciousness is irreversible and what should be done if this does not happen
7. how to carry out a back-up stunning or killing method and the circumstances in which this would be necessary
8. the importance of following the manufacturer's instructions for using pithing rods and any restraint equipment used
9. why it is important to check the cleanliness of tools and equipment
10. own responsibilities under animal welfare regulations for the pithing of livestock
11. how to access the organisational standard operating procedures
12. how to deal with operating problems within the limits of your responsibility

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