

Overview

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

You must also know how to address problems and adhere to regulatory standards and standard operating procedures and be able to apply your skills and knowledge within food safety and health and safety regulations and any relevant international industry codes. You should also have an understanding of how the green circular economy supports repeated use of resources and products within your organisation.

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

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. prepare to carry out pithing operations according to organisational requirements and standards
2. wear and use personal protective equipment according to 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. assess the effectiveness of stunning and take action where stunning has been ineffective
9. check restraint and position of livestock is correct for pithing
10. select and use rods to pith livestock
11. operate in ways which minimise avoidable pain, suffering and distress
12. insert pithing rod and ensure the destruction of the brain function
13. take action to deal with livestock that are not pithed according to organisational requirements and regulatory standards

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. the limits of your own authority and competence and why it is important to work within those limits
13. what recording, reporting and communication is needed, how to carry this out and the reasons why it is important to do so

Protect the welfare of animals during pithing operations

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