

GOOD ANIMAL HANDLING BEFORE SLAUGHTER IS ALSO GOOD BUSINESS

By Dorte Lene Schrøder-Petersen

Now, animal welfare standards can be measured and calibrated for maximum efficiency. The Welfare and Quality Check (WQC) is a perfect tool for surveillance, benchmarking and communication of your animal welfare.

Increasing Focus on Improving Animal Welfare at the Slaughterhouse

The majority of the earth's population eat meat from animals that are bred and slaughtered under industrialized conditions. The farmers, haulers and the meat industry are responsible for ensuring that the animals are treated well and without unnecessary use of force. Within the EU, and in many other parts of the world, animal welfare at the time of slaughter is regulated by law. At the same time there is growing public pressure in many countries to optimize animal welfare, including at the day of slaughter.

Animal welfare is not just about ethics and humanity, it is also about common sense and good economy. DMRI have experienced that handling

the animals in a gentle way before slaughter not only leads to good animal welfare, but also to good business - primarily because the quality of the meat is better from animals that are not stressed due to lower drip loss and less variation in pH, for example. In addition, gentle treatment also results in fewer injuries to the animals and survival of more animals until the time of slaughter - which reduces food waste.

It is Always Relevant to Optimize Animal Welfare - Even at Well-Run Slaughterhouses

It will often be possible to improve animal handling, or procedures related to the live animals, even in well-run plants. New operators, old layout or machinery - there is always a good reason for re-focusing on how the live animals are being handled. Some of the typical problems that indicate the need to renew the focus on animal welfare are a slow flow in production, increased need for trimming and increased drip loss. Very often these issues are just accepted as unsolvable problems.

The Areas In Production that Can Often be Optimized are as Follows:

- *Pick-up facility*

A well-designed pick-up facility can reduce the amount of fighting among the pigs, thereby reducing the degree of skin damage. Furthermore, in a well-designed facility, the pigs are encouraged to walk more voluntarily to the truck, thus reducing the time used to load the truck.

- *Transport*

A well-designed vehicle with good ventilation can reduce the number of animals dying during transport and in the lairage. Furthermore, an optimal logistic planning system can help minimize the stress during loading, and increase the meat quality measured by pH and drip loss.

- *Unloading*

Regarding unloading, it is important to optimize the design so that the pigs do not get frightened by external stimuli such as reflections and noises, therefore, voluntarily walking to the lairage. This facilitates the unloading process, reduces the amount of labour and optimizes the working conditions.

- *Lairage*

During lairage, the pigs should be kept in small groups. Dividing big lairage pens into smaller units (approx. 15 pigs per unit) will reduce fighting, since the pigs do not need to constantly re-establish their hierarchy. Research has shown that pigs in small groups are more relaxed after a 10-15 min period. This is beneficial due to the reduced amount of skin damage, which again reduces the amount of necessary trimming and probably optimizes the meat quality due to the decrease in drip loss.





optimize production economy - as well as improving animal welfare at the same time.

'In a world where there is a growing consciousness about animal welfare and sustainability, there is a constant need to focus and re-think the way we handle our animals. One way to secure compliance with legislation and consumer demands is to continuously educate the staff and implement



valid monitoring procedures'. (Dorte Schrøder-Petersen, DMRI)

About the author:

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Before she came to DMRI she was employed for 14 years in The Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark.
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TACKLING ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE THROUGH IMPROVED LIVESTOCK HEALTH AND WELFARE

Launch Of An Exciting EU - China Research Project

A new ambitious and ground-breaking project was launched: HealthyLivestock. Internationally renowned experts and scientists from the European Union and China will work together to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR). A key pillar of the project is disease prevention. Combined with prompt and targeted interventions where necessary, this will result in a reduced use of antimicrobials and less AMR: a clear win-win for animals and people.

Medicines against infectious diseases, called antimicrobials, are one of the most valuable inventions in human history. Since their discovery, antimicrobials have saved the lives of millions of people and animals. However, every antimicrobial use inevitably promotes the emergence of defense mechanisms by the disease agent.

HealthyLivestock has chosen to tackle antimicrobial resistance at its roots and covers the species of pigs and poultry.

Through a Multidisciplinary Approach it Will Lead to:

- reduction of the risk for animals to get exposed to disease agents,
- increased resilience of the animals towards disease challenges,
- early detection of health problems and specific diseases,
- and if antimicrobials are needed, a more precise use or alternatives.

Special tools to help farmers will be developed. The outcome of HealthyLivestock research will be conveyed to all relevant parties, including farmers, quality assurance scheme owners, and veterinarians working in livestock production, as well as animal welfare organizations, politicians, and decision makers.

GLOBALG.A.P. is part of the consortium and look forward to integrating practical outcomes of the research project into

our certification standards. In turn, the requirements and strategies put forward by the GLOBALG.A.P. IFA Standard regarding biosecurity, animal welfare, and antibiotic reduction strategies in the livestock provide a good foundation for HealthyLivestock. Our experience in quality assurance and in communicating and promoting improved biosecurity, antibiotic reduction strategies, and the avoidance of antimicrobial resistance at producer level are a major contribution to the project.

HealthyLivestock is coordinated by Wageningen Research. The project will last 4 years and integrates partners from academia, research institutes, and the private sector from the following countries: Belgium, China, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom. The consortium is funded by the European Commission and the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology.

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