

**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

# **Humane Handling of Disabled Livestock**

**Food Safety  
and Inspection  
Service**

**FSIS Directive  
6900.1  
Revision 1**

# HUMANE HANDLING OF DISABLED LIVESTOCK

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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE  
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**HUMANE HANDLING OF DISABLED LIVESTOCK  
PART ONE--BASIC PROVISIONS**

**I. PURPOSE**

This directive gives inspection program personnel procedures for ensuring the humane handling of disabled livestock by establishment employees from the time the livestock enter official establishment premises until the time they are slaughtered by humane methods.

**II. CANCELLATION**

FSIS Directive 6900.1, dated 4/29/92

**III. REASON FOR REISSUANCE**

This directive is being revised to inform all inspection program personnel of a new policy permitting inspection program personnel to either be outside transport vehicles or enter onto transport vehicles to conduct antemortem inspection if disabled livestock cannot be humanely removed from the vehicles by establishment employees. The decision to enter a transport vehicle to conduct antemortem inspection or to conduct antemortem inspection from outside the vehicle is to be made by each inspector individually and is completely voluntary. Inspection personnel may enter onto the transport vehicle or perform antemortem inspection from outside the transport vehicle if, in his or her professional opinion, he or she can safely and adequately conduct the antemortem inspection. No adverse or disciplinary action can or will be taken against any inspection program personnel choosing not to conduct antemortem inspection of disabled livestock on or from outside of a transport vehicle.

**IV. REFERENCES**

Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978  
9 CFR 304.2, 308.1, 308.3, 309.1(b), 309.2(b), 314.1 and 314.3  
9 CFR Part 313  
9 CFR 329.6  
9 CFR 352.10  
FSIS Directive 5400.5, dated 11/21/97  
FSIS Directive 8820.1, Revision 2, dated 9/6/96

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PRD; Import Offices**

## V. DEFINITIONS

**A. Ambulatory Disabled Livestock:** Livestock capable of walking but with physical impairment such as central nervous system signs, lameness or similar conditions.

**B. Humane Handling:** Handling and slaughter practices that cause a minimum of excitement, pain, injury or discomfort to livestock.

**C. Non-Ambulatory Disabled Livestock:** Livestock that cannot rise from a recumbent position (downer) or that cannot walk, including, but not limited to, those with broken appendages, severed tendons or ligaments, nerve paralysis, fractured vertebral column or metabolic conditions.

**D. Sufficient Personnel:** Establishment personnel who, in the opinion of appropriate inspection program personnel, are physically capable of safely assisting inspection program personnel in restraining livestock and with the humane handling of ambulatory and non-ambulatory disabled livestock.

**E. Suitable Equipment:** Establishment equipment that is, in the opinion of appropriate inspection program personnel, capable of enabling establishment personnel to move non-ambulatory disabled livestock with a minimum of excitement, pain or injury. This includes forklift or bobcat-type vehicles and self-propelled tractors capable of pulling stone boats (sleds) or similar conveyances, those conveyances themselves, and holding chutes, and a voltmeter or other suitable equipment that is capable of verifying voltage of electric prods attached to AC current.

**F. Suitable Restraints:** Establishment-provided restraints that are, in the opinion of appropriate inspection program personnel, capable of preventing injuries to Agency personnel when performing antemortem inspection, including when conducted on a transport vehicle, and minimizing excitement, pain or injury to livestock upon movement, such as holding chutes, squeeze pens and swinging gates.

## VI. BACKGROUND

**A.** Authorized inspection program personnel verify that disabled livestock handling procedures are carried out by official establishment employees to ensure that livestock that show signs of physical impairment or that are non-ambulatory are set apart and humanely slaughtered. They also ensure that the official establishment has adopted humane handling and slaughter practices for all livestock in accordance with the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978. Unconscious disabled livestock cannot receive antemortem inspection. They must be humanely handled, or condemned and disposed of in accordance with FSIS regulations.

**B.** Conscious disabled livestock cannot be dragged; however, they may be kept inside the transport vehicle in which they were transported to the establishment, or humanely moved to a designated covered area or pen by sufficient personnel and suitable equipment for antemortem inspection. Once a vehicle has entered an official slaughter establishment's premises, it is considered to be part of that establishment's premises. Inspection program personnel may go onto a transport vehicle to perform antemortem inspection of disabled livestock if, in his or her professional opinion, he or she can safely and adequately conduct the antemortem inspection. They may also conduct antemortem inspection outside the transport vehicle, if they choose. This action is voluntary and is performed at inspection program personnel discretion. No retaliatory action may or will be taken against inspection program personnel, by FSIS or an establishment, who choose not to perform an antemortem inspection on disabled livestock that cannot be humanely removed from the vehicle.

**C.** Non-ambulatory disabled livestock that have not received antemortem inspection and cannot be humanely moved must be humanely killed and condemned before they may be transported on the slaughter establishment's premises. This includes non-ambulatory disabled livestock that cannot be inspected while on the transport vehicle. Inspection program personnel should can and require that disabled livestock be humanely handled while on the transport vehicle at the slaughter establishment.

## **PART TWO--HUMANE HANDLING OF DISABLED LIVESTOCK BEFORE SLAUGHTER**

### **I. GENERAL FSIS INSPECTION PROCEDURES FOR ENSURING HUMANE HANDLING OF DISABLED LIVESTOCK**

#### **A. Disabled Livestock (general).**

##### **1. Inspection program personnel will:**

**a.** Grant permission for movement of disabled livestock on the official establishment premises after the establishment has provided sufficient personnel and suitable equipment to ensure humane handling.

**b.** Verify disabled livestock handling procedures carried out by establishment employees to ensure humane handling of disabled livestock from the time the transport vehicle carrying the disabled livestock enters the premises of the official slaughter establishment until they are humanely slaughtered, or condemned and killed in accordance with FSIS regulations.

**c.** Ensure that the establishment provides sufficient personnel to handle (separate, move and restrain) disabled livestock humanely, with a minimum of excitement, injury and discomfort.

**d.** Ensure that establishment management provides equipment and restraints suitable for humanely moving and restraining disabled livestock and other livestock unable to move.

**e.** Ensure that facilities are acceptable and are maintained in good condition:

**i.** Livestock pens, driveways and ramps are free from sharp corners, sharp or protruding objects, loose boards or broken planking, and unnecessary openings where livestock may be injured.

**ii.** Slip resistant floors, cleated ramps and sand for use during winter months are examples of acceptable construction and maintenance.

**iii.** Covered pens, including the interior of transport vehicles, sufficient, in the opinion of inspection program personnel, to protect U.S. Suspect livestock (diseased and disabled) from adverse climatic conditions while awaiting disposition, after establishment personnel have separated them from normal ambulatory animals.

**iv.** Sufficient space in holding pens to prevent overcrowding that might cause livestock to slip, fall or become injured and to allow livestock held overnight to lie down.

**v.** Protective padding or another soft surface is in place where needed to absorb shock and minimize pain and injury when unloading disabled livestock from transport vehicles, such as foam rubber pads, wood shavings, sand or straw.

**f.** Ensure that establishment personnel separate disabled livestock from the normal ambulatory livestock and place the disabled livestock in appropriate covered pens.

**g.** Ensure that establishment personnel handle and move disabled ambulatory livestock with a minimum of excitement and discomfort.

**i.** Livestock should not be driven faster than a normal walking speed.

**ii.** Use of electric prods, canvas slappers or other implements to drive animals should be minimized. Electric prods attached to AC current should be reduced to the lowest effective voltage not to exceed 50 volts AC, as verified with a voltmeter or other suitable equipment.

**iii.** Pipes, sharp objects or other items that would cause injury or unnecessary pain to the animal should not be used to drive livestock.

**h.** Ensure approved stunning methods are applied to livestock before they are shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast or cut.

i. Ensure that any disabled livestock are protected from adverse weather conditions after they enter official establishment premises. This includes the transport vehicle itself. In addition, livestock will have access to water in all holding pens and, if held longer than 24 hours, access to feed.

j. Ensure that any disabled livestock stunned without receiving antemortem inspection are humanely killed, condemned and disposed of in accordance with FSIS regulations.

k. Ensure that establishment personnel identify as "U.S. Suspect (tag or tattoo) and segregate seriously crippled, disabled and downer livestock that need further observation before slaughter. "Suspects" will remain identified until antemortem and postmortem inspections, and proper dispositions have been made.

l. Ensure that "U.S. Rejected" tags are applied to any equipment, walkways, antemortem pens or other areas if their construction, maintenance or use contribute to the inhumane handling of livestock. Tagged items, including transport vehicles, or areas will not be used and tags will not be removed by inspection program personnel until the establishment operator has provided satisfactory assurances that the situation will be corrected.

m. Inspection program personnel will stop slaughter operations whenever they observe a violation of the humane handling or slaughter regulations by an establishment employee.

2. Inspection program personnel will permit stunning and removal for slaughter of "U.S. Suspect" livestock that have passed antemortem inspection to prevent further suffering.

**B. Antemortem Inspection On or Outside Transport Vehicles.** Inspection program personnel will determine whether antemortem inspections on disabled livestock can be completely and thoroughly conducted. Inspection program personnel will also determine whether the antemortem inspection can be safely conducted.

**C. Movement of Ambulatory Disabled Livestock.** Inspection program personnel will ensure that establishment personnel avoid conditions that may cause livestock to slip or fall while in a walkway or chute.

**D. Movement of Non-Ambulatory Disabled Livestock.**

1. Inspection program personnel will ensure that, after livestock have been humanely removed from the transport vehicles, sufficient establishment personnel use suitable equipment and restraints to move conscious non-ambulatory disabled livestock to the designated antemortem areas or pens in a humane manner.

2. The Veterinary Medical Officer should examine all disabled livestock, including "downers" and those that show signs of trauma, in designated antemortem areas or pens.



## **E. Notifications**

Inspection program personnel will:

1. Notify establishment management of the reasons for taking action whenever a violation of humane handling, stunning or slaughter is observed and that the equipment or area where the incident occurred has been tagged as "U.S. Rejected." Inspection program personnel will remove tags and permit slaughter operations to resume if the situation is corrected by the establishment and assurances are received that it will not recur.
2. Refer any incident that is not resolved at the establishment level to the next higher level of FSIS supervision.

## **F. Documentation and Reports**

1. In non-HACCP slaughter establishments, document findings of humane handling regulation violations on FSIS Form 8820-2, Process Deficiency Record (PDR), under the following task codes, as appropriate:
  - a. 03A01a1/a2 or 03A03a1/a2, or
  - b. 03B01a2, 03B02a2, or 03B03a1/a2.
2. In HACCP establishments, document findings of humane handling regulation violations on FSIS Form 5400-4, Noncompliance Record (NR).
3. Documentation on a PDR or NR should include the following:
  - a. Nature of violation;
  - b. Name of establishment operator who was notified;
  - c. Length of time operations were stopped in any tagged areas;
  - d. Corrections made or assurances given;
  - e. An indication whether problems were resolved at the establishment level or referred to higher FSIS supervision.
4. The Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) will maintain a file of PDRs or NRs documenting the violations of inhumane handling, stunning or slaughter requirements. The IIC will send a copy of PDRs or NRs to the District Office.

## **II. SUFFICIENT PERSONNEL**

Inspection program personnel will ensure that the establishment provides sufficient personnel who are physically capable of moving and restraining livestock that need to be restrained for the humane handling of ambulatory and non-ambulatory livestock and the safety of Agency personnel, and assisting Agency personnel when performing antemortem inspection on non-ambulatory livestock.

## **III. SUITABLE EQUIPMENT AND RESTRAINTS**

**A. Equipment.** Inspection program personnel will verify that:

1. Suitable and properly maintained equipment is used to humanely move disabled livestock. Suitable equipment includes, but is not limited to: holding chutes, forklift or bobcat-type vehicles, stone boats (sleds), self-propelled tractors capable of pulling sleds or similar conveyances, wheeled carts or any other equipment appropriate for the heights, distances and the type of livestock to be moved.

2. Sleds, wheeled carts or any other equipment, whether self-propelled or pulled by other vehicles, are strong and large enough so that disabled livestock can be moved in a humane manner.

3. A voltmeter or other suitable equipment capable of verifying voltage of electric prods attached to AC current is provided and properly maintained.

4. Equipment is maintained in a clean condition.

**B. Restraints.** Inspection program personnel will verify that:

1. Suitable restraints to humanely restrain disabled livestock being moved or inspected and to prevent injury to inspection program personnel are used and properly maintained.

2. Restraints used to protect disabled livestock and inspection program personnel are maintained in a clean condition.

/s/ Margaret O'K. Glavin

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