

## Humane Handling of Livestock

### OBJECTIVES


Upon completion of this module you will be able to accomplish the following without the aid of references:

**Humane Handling Objectives**

1. Describe how inspection personnel should approach the activities of ensuring handling and slaughter of livestock is humane.
2. Verify the livestock pens, driveways and ramps meet humane handling standards.
3. Verify humane handling of livestock in the ante mortem pens.
4. Identify who to notify if inhumane handling is witnessed.

1. Describe how inspection personnel should approach the activities of ensuring handling and slaughter of livestock is humane.
2. Verify the livestock pens, driveways and ramps meet humane handling standards.
3. Verify humane handling of livestock in the ante-mortem pens.
4. Identify who to notify if inhumane handling is witnessed.

**Humane Slaughter**



The use of humane methods in the slaughter and handling of livestock prevents needless suffering, results in safer working conditions for packing house workers, improves the quality of meat products, and decreases a significant financial loss to meat packers.

The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the government agency that has been delegated the responsibility to ensure livestock are handled and

slaughtered humanely in accordance with current federal laws.

You are receiving this training because you may be asked to assist in monitoring plant facilities and the activities of plant personnel to assure compliance with humane slaughter laws.

The Humane Slaughter Act of 1978 is the law that is currently enforced by the USDA.

**Humane Slaughter Act of 1978**

- Humane methods became mandatory
- Two methods specified as humane
- Livestock must be rendered insensible to pain before being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut.

1978

The 1978 Act made humane slaughter and handling of livestock in connection with slaughter of all food animals slaughtered in USDA inspected plants mandatory. This law covers cattle, calves, horses, mules, sheep, goats, swine, and other livestock.

Two methods of slaughter were determined to be humane.

1 -The first method requires that livestock are rendered insensible to pain on the first application of

the stunning device before being shackled, hoisted, cast, or cut.

2- The second method is in accordance with the ritual requirements of any religious faith (e.g. Kosher, Halal, etc) that prescribes a method of slaughter where the animal suffers loss of consciousness by anemia of the brain caused by the simultaneous and instantaneous severance of the carotid arteries with a sharp instrument. This is often referred to as ritual slaughter.

**Humane Handling**

- Once vehicle has entered official establishment premises, it is considered to be part of that establishment's premises.



FSIS has authority on an establishment's official premises. Once a vehicle has entered the official establishment premises, it is considered to be part of the premises and is subject to the FSIS regulations that ensure humane handling.


However, the authority of the humane handling regulations begins from the time the livestock are in the queue for slaughter until the animal becomes a carcass.

Truck unloading must be done in a manner which allows animals to be unloaded without injury. This includes proper positioning of the trucks, movement of animals while on the trucks, and the movement of animals off of the trucks into the holding pens. Personnel responsible for moving livestock from the livestock trailers to the unloading ramps to the holding pens and from the holding pens to the stunning area must do so with a minimum of excitement and discomfort to the animals.

**Humane Handling**

■ **Pens, Driveways, and Ramps**

- kept in good repair
- kept free of objects which may injure, cause pain
- provide good footing



## **Pens, Driveways and Ramps**

Pens, driveways, and ramps must be maintained in good repair. They must be kept free from sharp or protruding objects that can cause injury. Loose boards, splintered or broken planks, broken pipe rails, broken unloading ramps, and unnecessary openings where the head, feet, or legs of an animal may be injured must be repaired.

Regulations require that ramps; driveways, and the floors of pens be constructed and maintained so that the livestock have good footing. It may be necessary for the plant to use sand or some other material on the floors during the winter to overcome slick conditions.

Pens, alleyways, or fencing in disrepair such that an animal may be injured as a result would be considered a regulatory violation of humane practices.

Some examples of infractions that you may observe include:

- Holes, cracks, or openings in the floor that can trap and injure feet
- Holes, cracks, or openings in the fences or gates that can trap and injure feet/legs/head/snout
- Sharp, jagged, or protruding edges of fences or gates that can injure
- Smooth or minimally grooved floors that are not sufficiently slip resistant and allow animals to slip and/or fall
- Multiple animals slipping and/or falling, either all at the same time or at different times but always at the same place

Here are some specific examples of humane handling violations related to livestock pens, driveways and ramps:



A hole, located in a holding pen floor with a metal staple and ring attached to the base of the hole that may cause an animal to fall or result in injury to feet.




A weathered and splintered tree trunk sitting inside a livestock holding pen, exposing sharp protruding edges, points and holes that may trap and injure the feet, legs and heads of animals kept in the pen



Bent fencing sufficient to allow injury to an animal's foot

**Humane Handling**

- **Handling of Livestock**
  - drive at walk, minimum excitement
  - no sharp objects
  - electric prods < 50 volts



### Handling of livestock

Livestock must be moved with a minimum of excitement and discomfort to the animals. Animals must not be forced to move faster than a normal walking speed.

When moving animals the use of electric prods, canvas slappers, or any other type of implement must be minimized to prevent injury and excitement. The use of implements such as baseball bats, shovels, sharp prods, whips and the like, which in the opinion

of the inspector can or will cause injury, are prohibited.

Electric prods must not carry a charge higher than 50 volts.

**Humane Handling**

- **Disabled livestock must be handled using humane methods from time of entering official premises to time of slaughter.**
  - Move to covered "suspect" pens
  - No dragging of conscious animals

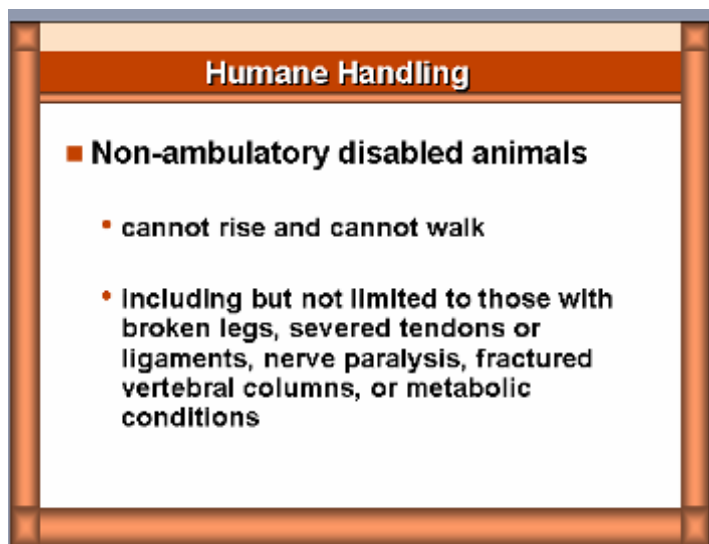
### Disabled and non-ambulatory disabled animals

FSIS has very specific regulations with regard to disabled animals.

Animals that are disabled or unable to move must be segregated into the covered suspect pen.

Regulations strictly prohibit the dragging of a conscious animal that is unable to walk.





A presentation slide titled "Humane Handling" with a brown header. The main content is a white box with a brown border containing a bulleted list. The list is headed by a square bullet point and contains two circular bullet points.

**Humane Handling**

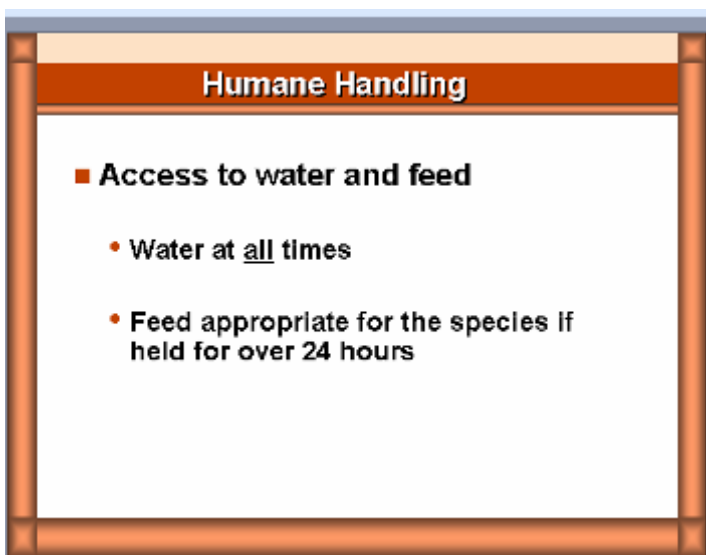
- **Non-ambulatory disabled animals**
  - cannot rise and cannot walk
  - Including but not limited to those with broken legs, severed tendons or ligaments, nerve paralysis, fractured vertebral columns, or metabolic conditions

Non-ambulatory disabled livestock are defined by FSIS regulations as “livestock that cannot rise from a recumbent position or that cannot walk, including, but not limited to, those with broken appendages, severed tendons or ligaments, nerve paralysis, fractured vertebral columns, or metabolic conditions.”

Establishment personnel must either stun non-ambulatory disabled animals before dragging them or move the animals by placing them on a

skid, stone boat, bucket lift, or some other type of equipment that is suitable for moving a conscious but disabled animal.

If an animal becomes non-ambulatory after it has passed pre-slaughter inspected by FSIS, but before it reaches the area of slaughter, an FSIS inspector must be notified that the animal is down so that it may be tagged as a “Suspect” and held for reinspection by a FSIS veterinarian.



A presentation slide titled "Humane Handling" with a brown header. The main content is a white box with a brown border containing a bulleted list. The list is headed by a square bullet point and contains two circular bullet points.

**Humane Handling**

- **Access to water and feed**
  - Water at all times
  - Feed appropriate for the species if held for over 24 hours

### Access to food and water

Regulations require livestock to have access to water at all times while in holding pens.

If they are held longer than 24 hours, animals must have access to feed that is appropriate for the species and age of the animal.

If animals are held overnight, they must have enough room in the holding pen to lie down without being forced to lie on top of one another.

**Examples of Inhumane Handling**

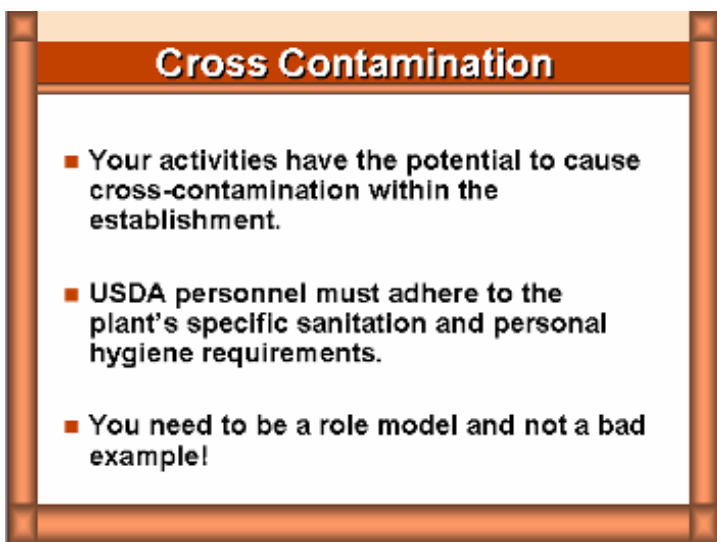
- **While animals are being driven to the holding pens they are slipping and falling in the drive alleys.**
- **During a visit to the livestock barns, you observe a livestock driver using an electric prod to drive an animal to a holding pen. The driver is applying the prod to the rectum, genitals, muzzle, and mouth of this animal. The animal is vocalizing when touched by the prod.**

Here are some examples of inhumane handling practices that you might observe:

- a. Animals are slipping and falling in the drive alleys when they are being driven to the holding pens.
- b. A livestock truck driver might be repeatedly using an electric prod to drive an animal to a holding pen. Each time the prod is applied, the animal vocalizes.

Other examples of possible infractions that you may observe include:

- Animals being forced to move at greater than a walking pace
- Ambulatory animals being allowed to walk on nonambulatory animals
- Excessive use of electric prod/alternative implement
- Using an electric prod to touch eyes, nose, mouth, anus, genitals, udder, ears
- Electrified prod generating current of more than 50 volts
- Using sharp or pointed implements to prod animals
- Trying to force animals to move when there is no where for them to go
- No access to water



**Cross Contamination**

- **Your activities have the potential to cause cross-contamination within the establishment.**
- **USDA personnel must adhere to the plant's specific sanitation and personal hygiene requirements.**
- **You need to be a role model and not a bad example!**

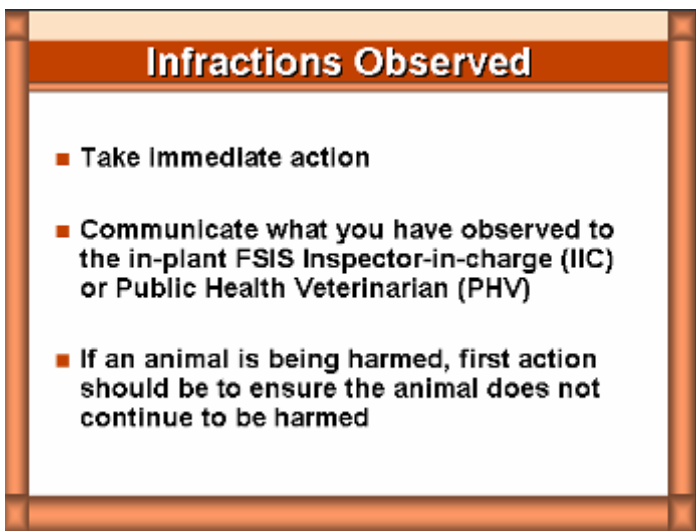
### **Cross contamination concerns**

As a USDA employee, you should be aware that your activities have a potential to cause cross contamination in the establishment.

Cross contamination may have public health significance, (e.g. your movement from an insanitary area to a sanitary area may result in product contamination).

You must adhere to the plant's specific sanitation and personal hygiene requirements. This may include changing of cover garments, boot dips, hand-washing or other practices with movement within the establishment.

As a representative of USDA, it is imperative that you lead through example during the performance of your official duties within federally inspected meat establishments.



**Infractions Observed**

- **Take Immediate action**
- **Communicate what you have observed to the in-plant FSIS Inspector-in-charge (IIC) or Public Health Veterinarian (PHV)**
- **If an animal is being harmed, first action should be to ensure the animal does not continue to be harmed**

### **When humane handling infractions are observed**

If you observe a humane handling infraction, you must take immediate action.

If an animal is being harmed, your first duty should be to ensure that the animal doesn't continue to be harmed. For example, if you observe an employee driving livestock with an instrument (the edge of a shovel, a pointed metal

prod) that can cause injury, you must stop that action from continuing. Your action or inaction should not result in further or continued inhumane treatment to the animal. So, take care of the animal first.

Immediately communicate your observations and actions to the Inspector in charge (IIC) or Public Health Veterinarian (PHV) at the slaughter establishment.



Whenever a violation of the humane slaughter requirements is observed, FSIS inspection personnel will document the incident on a Noncompliance Record (NR), with a copy to be sent to the District Office. Each inhumane activity will be assessed individually by the IIC, and appropriate enforcement actions will be taken when necessary.

Immediate removal of FSIS inspection personnel (Suspension) from an establishment is warranted when inhumane handling is egregious. "Egregious" is defined as "flagrant", "conspicuously bad"; or "especially bad".

Examples of egregious humane handling violations could include:

- excessive beating or prodding of ambulatory or non-ambulatory disabled animals
- dragging conscious animals
- driving animals off semi-trailers over a drop off without providing adequate unloading facilities (animals are falling to the ground),
- running equipment over animals,
- disabled livestock left exposed to adverse climate conditions while awaiting disposition.
- any other condition or action that intentionally causes unnecessary pain and suffering to animals, including situations on trucks.

## REFERENCES

1. Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978
2. Federal Meat Inspection Act Section 603
3. 9CFR 313: Humane Slaughter of Livestock  
9CFR 352.10: Exotic Animals; Voluntary Inspection. Ante-mortem inspection
4. FSIS Directive 6900.1 Revision 1- "Humane Handling of Disabled Livestock"
5. FSIS Directive 6900.2 Revision 1- "Humane Handling and Slaughter of Livestock"
6. FSIS Notice 12-05: "Documentation of Humane Handling Activities"
7. Federal Register Notice Docket No. 04-013N – A Systematic Approach to Humane Handling
8. FSIS Policy Communication" Memo from Dr. Mark Mina to District Offices/dated October 5, 2001. [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/haccp/memo\\_mina100501.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/haccp/memo_mina100501.htm)

## QUIZ

Mark the most appropriate answer. Where indicated, more than one answer may apply.

1. Humane methods of handling animals and humane slaughter operations are top priorities.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. The regulations strictly prohibit the dragging of a conscious animal that is unable to walk.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Which of the following could cause injury or discomfort to animals during unloading, weighing, or driving to the stunning area? (choose all that apply)
  - a. an unloading ramp with a 2-inch section of the planking missing
  - b. several bolts protruding from the pen posts
  - c. icy runways
  - d. floors in the pens are smooth concrete
4. You observe a group of fat steers running down an alley way away from a plant employee that is walking very slowly and calmly behind them. The employee is carrying a plastic bag that he has used to move the cattle. Is this an infraction of humane handling methods?
  - a. Yes, because the animals are running instead of walking slowly.
  - b. No, because the animals appear to be moving quickly on their own accord (due to a large flight zone), and a plastic bag cannot be used to injure the cattle when it is used
5. You observe a plant employee using an electric prod on an animal lying down in a pen. The animal is not getting up and is vocalizing as it is being prodded. What should you do? Choose the most appropriate answer below:
  - a. Immediately communicate what you have observed to in-plant PHV or IIC.
  - b. Tell the plant employee to stop prodding the animal; notify the District manager and the Humane Society.
  - c. Tell the plant employee to stop prodding the animal, immediately communicate what you have observed, and your actions to the in-plant PHV or IIC.
  - d. Inform the plant management of the incident and request that they take the necessary steps to prevent a recurrence, and then notify the in-plant PHV or IIC.

6. An animal that is conscious, but not able to stand or walk, should be moved by which of the following methods?
  - a. Loading the animal onto a skid, stone boat, bucket lift, or any other method that will not, in your opinion, cause undue excitement and/ or pain
  - b. Allow the establishment to stun the animal then allow it to be dragged
  - c. Either of the above
  - d. None of the above
  
7. You observe a cow in a holding pen. There is a bucket of water that has recently been overturned next to her. You look to see if there is another source of water in the pen for the cow and find none. Is this a humane handling infraction?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
8. Animals that are delivered to the slaughter plant at 3:30 p.m. on Monday are intended to be slaughtered no later than noon on Tuesday would require both water and feed.
  - a. True
  - b. False