**AQIS NOTICE**

**MEAT 2005/05**

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<th>Mandatory Thoracic Stick for All Calf Slaughter</th>
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<td>Contact Officer: Anand Deo</td>
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**Date of Effect** 15 August 2005  
**Date of Expiry** Until further notice  
**Senior Veterinary Officer**  
Meat Program, Food Exports  
02 6272 5864

**Distribution Category**  
☑ Central & Regional Office  
☑ Meat Inspection Staff  
☐ State/Territory Departments Responsible for Agriculture

**Last Notice this Category**  
1999/17

**Implementing Category**  
☐ Managers, Export Meat Establishments  
☑ Managers, Export Slaughtering Establishments

**Last Notice this Category**  
1999/17

**IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE** (to be completed by the On Plant Supervisor on the AQIS file copy)

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<th>Initial Implementation Date</th>
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**PURPOSE**

To clarify that thoracic stick is mandatory for all calves slaughtered, and ensure the current stunning and slaughter practices in place at export-registered establishments comply with animal welfare requirements.

**SCOPE**

This notice applies to all export registered establishments slaughtering calves.

**BACKGROUND**

AQIS Meat Notice 1999/17 on animal welfare (Attachment 1, under ‘Calves and Halal Sticking’) recommended “a thoracic stick immediately after the Halal stick as desirable” for calves.  
Sticking initiates primary bleeding and hastens the onset of irreversible insensibility of animals, thus reducing the perception of pain.

Calves have a prolonged bleeding time due to the presence of the recurrent vertebral arteries and the potential for the occlusion of the cut peripheral arteries (e.g. the carotids) by clotting or constriction of the cut end, which can delay bleeding and the onset of insensibility. Following the initial stick, this bleed out time can reach as long
as 200 seconds whereas the effect of reversible (eg. electrical or percussion) stun only lasts 20 to 60 seconds.

Due to this difference, there is a potential for some calves to have a prolonged duration of sensibility following slaughter. This is an animal welfare concern.

When chest/thoracic sticking was used occlusion of blood vessels did not occur, the mean arterial blood pressure fell promptly and the onset of iso-electric state did not extend beyond one minute.

DEFINITION

Calf: A young bovine animal up to 150kgs carcass weight.

PROCEDURE

To prevent welfare problems when slaughtering calves, it is mandatory to perform a thoracic stick immediately after the initial neck stick. The total time from stun to thoracic stick must not exceed 20 seconds. This applies to ALL calves slaughtered at export listed plants.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES*

All establishments that slaughter calves need to incorporate this procedure into their Animal Welfare SOP and develop work instructions for the stick operator.

AQIS RESPONSIBILITIES*

The OPVO should verify the SOP and work instructions and ensure compliance with this procedure. Weekly verification checks must be recorded in Form 1.

Carol Sheridan
Manager
Meat Program

References