



Emergency Slaughter - new training video

On Thursday 26 February 2004, Professor Sir Colin Spedding and Professor Mac Johnston introduced the HSA's latest training video *Emergency Slaughter* at the Farmers Club, London to industry representatives.

The video, which lasts 35 minutes, gives practical guidance on the humane killing of injured, diseased and non-viable livestock. Dealing with both red and white meat species, the video is divided into nine sections covering the various means of humane killing currently available to livestock farmers.

The video is aimed primarily at livestock keepers, but will be of interest and use to veterinary surgeons, knackermen, RSPCA inspectors, animal health officers, agricultural students and others involved in dealing with casualty livestock. The need for such a training aid, in this often overlooked part of livestock production, was first identified nearly ten years ago, but proved difficult to produce because of the problems in



obtaining suitable footage of casualty and emergency slaughter. We therefore extend our thanks to Defra for allowing us access to their footage, filmed mainly during the 2001 outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, which allowed us to complete this project.

The video is available at a special launch offer of £15 for the video only, or £20 to include copies of HSA publications: *Captive-Bolt Stunning of Livestock*, *Humane Killing of Livestock Using Firearms* and *Practical Slaughter of Poultry*. To order your copy please send full payment to the HSA office.

Quotes

'...we feel that it will be an excellent training tool. Obviously, the RSPCA will wish to purchase the video for our own training purposes.'

JOHN AVIZIENIUS, RSPCA

'...I think this is a really useful guide for all those involved.'

DAVID HENDERSON MRCVS

New regulations on slaughter and killing to enhance animal welfare

On 6 January three new amendments to the regulations controlling slaughter were brought into force. These are the:

- wider use of the percussive, captive-bolt instrument for poultry
- ending of the current ban on bleeding of animals in the sight of other animals of the same species; however, this ban currently still applies to equines
- surrender of suspended/revoked slaughter licences to the Meat Hygiene Service

A fourth amendment will come into force on 6 January 2005 which reduces from six to three minutes the maximum time that turkeys can be hung before being stunned or killed. For other poultry, the time will be reduced from three to two minutes.

Full details and explanations can be found on the Defra website at:

www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/farmed/slaughter/wask-guide1.pdf

Chairman's comment

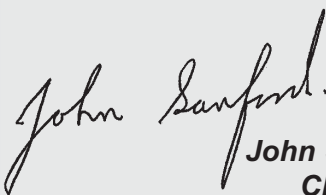
The charity continues its many activities in the furtherance of animal welfare at slaughter. The launch of the new video, *Emergency Slaughter*, makes an important contribution to our training aids. A wide range of people may sometimes find it necessary to kill sick or injured animals and the video shows how this, often difficult, task may be carried out humanely.

In order to provide extensive guidelines to the industry, the HSA has produced a new series of best practice guidelines for the slaughter of pigs, cattle, sheep and goats in abattoirs. These are due to be launched in March and similar documents for poultry are in preparation.

During 2003 the HSA supported the development of a pipeline electrical fish stunning system suitable for commercial fish farms. In addition, a postgraduate student has started research into the humane slaughter of sea fish.

Staff continue their programme of practical instruction including a series of courses in the use of firearms for slaughter, which was held in NE Scotland.

Finally the HSA has supported a feasibility study for mobile slaughter units for poultry. On-farm slaughter is ideal for animal welfare but economic, legal and planning problems must be surmounted before this desirable goal can be reached.



John Sanford
Chairman

Estonia

In October, HSA Technical Officer Tess Benson travelled to Estonia to present a talk on animal welfare within the abattoir. The meeting, arranged and funded by TAIEX, was aimed at 25 vets who will be responsible for implementing the new European legislation when Estonia becomes part of Europe later this year. Following the conference, a trip was made to a local pig abattoir, which currently uses similar methods to those used in small abattoirs in the UK.

HSA fish guidance notes

The first guidance notes to cover fish slaughter are now being developed. They are currently out for consultation with a number of prominent members of the industry. The guidance, written mainly for round fish (salmon and trout), covers all aspects of the handling and slaughter process including crowding, pumping, slaughter methods and how to evaluate effective stunning. It is hoped that the guidance notes will be available later this year.

Market award

Competition for the 2003 Market Development Award was very intense. The winner was Dingwall Market for developments resulting in significant improvements to animal welfare. The new site handles a large number of animals from the Highlands and Islands that need overnight care. In addition to outdoor lairage facilities allowing sheep to rest in familiar conditions, pens have also been designed in such a way to avoid right-angled bends. The award was given specifically for the design of the gates at the loading dock. These gates allow for a wide range of vehicle sizes to load and unload safely, by moving both vertically and horizontally.

Stop press...

We have great pleasure in announcing that HSA Technical Officer Tess Benson has been awarded a 2004 Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship. Tess is planning to visit Alaska, Canada, the USA and Mexico in the autumn, to study handling and slaughter methods of fish.

Carcase disposal

Last year we reported a number of changes to the law which effectively banned the burial of animals on farms, except in a small number of remote areas. In an effort to help with disposal, Defra is currently setting up a company to run the Fallen Stock Scheme. To join the scheme farmers pay a subscription which is dependent on the size of their farm. By ringing a central number, dead animals are registered and then collected by a local knackerman who will dispose of the carcasses legally. Initially the scheme will be heavily subsidised by the Government but this support will decrease over the first three years, after which livestock farmers will have to cover all the costs.

The scheme is for agricultural animals only and not for horses, unless proven that they are used for agricultural purposes. There are now calls to set up a similar scheme for horses, before horse disposal becomes so expensive that it causes welfare problems.

Farmed sea fish

The HSA, in association with the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW), is helping to support a PhD student researching the humane slaughter of sea fish.

The aim of the project is to develop recent technology, initially designed for trout, into systems suitable for farmed sea fish such as sea bass and bream. These fish are farmed throughout Europe and killed using inhumane methods such as immersion in slush ice. Previous work has focussed on the use of electricity in fresh water. Electricity passing through sea water behaves very differently, therefore new systems need to be developed to ensure enough current is delivered to the fish to render them immediately insensible to pain. In addition to receiving financial support, Ambrose Tinarwo will be spending time with the HSA to gain practical knowledge of fish slaughter.

Poultry welfare training

During 2003 the HSA spent a number of days training poultry farmers and researchers in methods of humane slaughter, using the Cash Poultry Killer and hand-held electrical stunner. Training was given in the current legislation regarding poultry slaughter, the correct catching and handling techniques, proper restraint and slaughter principles.

The practical and theoretical training given enabled the trainees to achieve their Certificates of Competence, required for a slaughter licence, in time for the busy Christmas period.

AMI Conference

HSA technical staff played a major role at the Association of Meat Inspectors' Euro-seminar in early September 2003. Charlie Mason and Tess Benson gave presentations on the latest developments in animal welfare at slaughter and the welfare of farmed fish at slaughter respectively. Charlie focussed on the humane slaughter of exotic species, the electrical stunning monitor and alternatives to captive-bolt stunning. Tess's paper stimulated much interest as the subject was completely new to most delegates: the presentation included an outline of the methods of fish slaughter currently being used and developed in the UK and worldwide.

Slaughter CD-ROM

Following the transfer of the transport video onto CD-ROM in 2002, plans are now being made to transfer the video *Humane Slaughter – Taking Responsibility* into the same format. Unfortunately this exercise will not be as straightforward as first thought. It is nearly ten years since the video was made and there are parts which need updating and adding to in order to cover the latest slaughter techniques, such as the electrical stunning of cattle.

The total cost of this project may well be in the region of £20,000. We therefore need to look at the prospective market very carefully and investigate how the funding for the project will be achieved.

HSA's Best Practice Guidelines

Following a second industry consultation, the guidelines for sheep and goats are in the final stages of production and on target for the March launch. This will take place at Foodex Meatex 2004, one of the major industry events this year. In addition, guidelines for cattle and pigs have also been sent out for their second consultation. By launching all three documents together, the industry will receive extensive guidelines on slaughter within the red meat sector. Work has also started on corresponding guidelines for broilers and hens, which are due to be released later this year.

Firearms courses

In January 2004 the HSA's Technical Director spent a week in NE Scotland, providing a number of firearms training courses at the request of the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD).

Six courses were delivered over five days to approximately 100 delegates including veterinary officers, pig farmers, knackermen and representatives of the North of Scotland British Veterinary Association. Classroom-style training, covering the safe use and maintenance of captive-bolt stunners, was followed by practical weapon handling and maintenance procedures. The session included the humane killing of cull animals. Due to the success of the week, plans are being made for further courses in other regions.

Fish stunning

At the end of 2003 HSA technical staff witnessed the first commercial operation of a new trout stunning machine. The machine, which is a pipeline stunner, is based on the electrical principles developed by Jeff Lines and Steve Kestin in a recent Link Aquaculture project. The stunner, which is now a permanent fixture on the farm, stuns trout effectively at a rate of 6 tonnes per hour. There has been a move towards pipeline systems since the recent HSA-supported work showed that effective stunning/killing can be achieved in two stages, whilst passing through one pipe. The owners, who received an HSA grant towards this work, now plan to order and fit a further 15 machines on their sites across Scotland.



Trout stunning machine

Mobile slaughter units

During 2003 the HSA supported a project by the Food Animal Initiative (FAI) based at Oxford University. This project explored the practical and economic feasibility of mobile slaughter units (MSUs) for poultry. Potentially, the MSU could improve the welfare of millions of birds each year by eliminating the need for live transport. The development of an MSU might also be relevant as a humane system for disease control.

Although not all of the technology proposed is currently available, the costs were estimated to be in the region of £335,000 for equipment and £125,000 per annum labour costs. Even with these high costs, if utilised properly the system could compete favourably with current procedures. The FAI is now considering the licensing requirements and how to move the idea forward.

Welfare of exotics

Over the past few years queries regarding 'exotic' species have increased. To help understand current slaughter practices for these species, the HSA funded a survey undertaken by staff at Moulton College. Producers were asked to provide information about methods of transport and slaughter. Dr Bornett will be presenting the results at the British Society for Animal Science Symposium at York University in April 2004. The results of the project will be reviewed in the Annual Report.

Technical Notes

Technical Note No. 10 - *Electrical Waterbaths* is now available. This Technical Note aims to provide practical advice on the use of electrical waterbaths for poultry. Two further Technical Notes, *Gas Killing of Broilers and Turkeys* and *Design Specifications – Handling Facilities for Abattoirs and Farms* have also been produced.

Culling infant animals

The requirement to cull animals, for whatever reason, can be an everyday reality for many farmers. The killing of infant animals is never an easy option, but the decision is often made in order to protect their welfare. Very young livestock is generally killed by applying a manual blow to the animal's head. In theory this is the same as using a mechanical stunning method, but the chance of consistently producing a humane kill is not guaranteed. The AWTraining group at Bristol University, with assistance from the HSA, is currently undertaking a project (funded by Defra) to develop mechanical stunning technologies to be used on the farm.

The need for such equipment was highlighted at the Goat Veterinary Society's autumn meeting. The HSA gave a presentation outlining the methods available to livestock keepers and evaluated each one in terms of effectiveness, consistency, health and safety, cost and carcase disposal implications. The suitability of each method for different farming systems was discussed and it was left to the individual producers to decide which was the most suitable option for their particular circumstances.

Diary dates

Mar	14–17	Meatex Exhibiton, NEC, Birmingham
May	12–13	Pig and Poultry Fair, NAC, Stoneleigh
Sep	2–5	AMI Conference, Harper Adams College, Shrops.
Oct	5	HSA General Meeting, Wheathampstead
Dec	2–5	Smithfield Show, Earls Court, London

Further dates awaiting confirmation will be available on the HSA website