

Cattle Stun-to-Stick. Optimal Animal Welfare Decision Process Flow.

A joint document by

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Guiding Principles:

- 1) The 60 second stun-to-stick interval should only be a monitoring tool and not an audit non-compliance (N/C). It is not a legal requirement; both Assimilated Regulation N° (EC) 1099/2009 and the Welfare of Animals at the time of Killing Regulations provide no time constraints, just “without delay” or as “soon as possible”, based on Article 4, (1) that “*The loss of consciousness and sensibility shall be maintained until the death of the animal*”.
- 2) The critical factor during the stun-to-stick process is unconsciousness. Assimilated Regulation N° (EC) 1099/2009, Article 4 (1) states: *Animals shall only be killed after stunning in accordance with the methods and specific requirements related to the application of those methods set out in Annex 1. The loss of consciousness and sensibility shall be maintained until the death of the animal.*
- 3) 60 seconds risks becoming a ‘clock’ watching exercise rather than ‘animal’ watching and may result in animals being bled in a potentially less-than-optimal manner.
- 4) Using the 60 second stun-to-stick interval may be a useful indicator of necessary changes to facility / process being required, if the majority of stun-to-stick episodes approximate or exceed sixty seconds. However, it should not be used as a penalty when there is a specific cause for the delay (e.g. excessive kicking or abnormal roll-out position where the leg cannot be shackled as quickly as it would normally be), as long as the animal continues to show signs of effective stunning and unconsciousness.
- 5) A thoracic stick on a normally hoisted (and unconscious) animal is the fastest and most efficient bleed to ensure death in an unconscious bovine – this is the primary aim during the stun to stick process flow.
- 6) A neck stick on a cradle has the welfare disadvantage of not cutting the vertebral artery leading to a slower bleed out to death.



- 7) A thoracic stick on a cradle has the animal welfare and human health-and-safety disadvantages of presenting a potentially more difficult access to the vessels of the brachiocephalic arch, together with chest compression in lateral recumbency.
- 8) If an animal is unconscious following a captive-bolt (CB) stun, the application of a second CB 'shot' to facilitate safe shackling (due to excess kicking or difficult posture roll-out onto the cradle), may alleviate this situation. This is not bad practice and **should not** be considered a second stun in these circumstances, as long as the animal continues to show signs of effective stunning and unconsciousness.
- 9) The reasons for the requirement for a second shot (i.e. for excess kicking or bad landing position) should be recorded and the process evaluated on a regular basis. Assimilated Regulation No (EC) 1099/2009 Article 16 Monitoring procedures at slaughterhouses, 2 (f)...*the stunning or killing operations are reviewed in order to identify the causes of any shortcomings and the necessary changes to be made to those operations.*
- 10) Not every animal with excess kicking or that presents in a difficult shackling position at roll-out will necessarily require a second shot, but it is important that this is an option to support best practice animal welfare and must not in any way be considered a non-compliance against either practice or time.



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