



28 August 2020

HSA guides and best practice highlighted by BVA as part of new policy document

A comprehensive new policy document that makes 67 recommendations to the Government about improving the welfare of animals at slaughter has just been published by the British Veterinary Association (BVA).

The new policy aims to build on current legislation and best practice, and focuses on the final events in an animal's life, spanning multiple areas in the slaughter process. Throughout the 70 page document, the HSA's advice and guidance are referenced, with the BVA supporting the charity's guidance on the humane handling of livestock, best practice guidelines for group stunning systems and its principles to minimise distress during handling procedures outlined in its guidance on handling operations and facility design. The HSA's advice on a number of points from guidance on fish welfare during transportation and harvesting operations to the stunning methods typically used for different species in UK abattoirs was also endorsed.

In addition, the BVA noted the HSA's programme of research, co-funded with Defra, to determine the welfare impacts of Low Atmospheric Pressure Stunning (LAPS) in pigs, as an alternative to carbon dioxide stunning and its extensive work to improve the welfare of farmed finfish, wild-caught fish, decapod crustaceans and cephalopods during slaughter.

The HSA's Technical Director, Charlie Mason, was part of the working group and one of the advisors to the policy document. He said: *"This report was compiled after a series of meetings involving a wide range of experience and expertise from the realms of industry, research, the legislature, NGOs and the veterinary profession. As well as a policy statement, it will be an extremely useful reference document for anyone involved, at any level, with the welfare of animals at slaughter. The HSA was represented at every meeting, making a number of significant contributions including a presentation on pig slaughter, and it is particularly pleasing that references to HSA publications and opinions are made throughout the document, demonstrating how trusted and influential our expertise is. The BVA is to be congratulated for producing this report, despite the limitations imposed by the current Covid-19 restrictions."*

BVA senior-vice president Simon Doherty said: *“Updating our position on the welfare of animals at slaughter has been a long time in the making. This work has been informed by our working group, which drew on a breadth of experience from across the profession, with representatives from BVA specialist divisions, animal welfare organisations, and leading experts and academics.*

“From making sure that stunning methods are as effective as possible, to looking at the specific needs of each species, revalidation of training for operators and championing the role of the OV, there is a lot of work to be done, but we look forward to progressing these recommendations and working to improve the welfare of farmed animals across the UK.”

The association’s new policy comes ahead of an upcoming review of England’s Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing regulations (WATOK) by Defra.

The full policy document can be viewed here <https://www.bva.co.uk/media/3664/full-position-bva-position-on-the-welfare-of-animals-at-slaughter.pdf>

Ends