



# Ante-mortem handling and Inspection of meat animals

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# Introduction:

- The term ante-mortem means before death, it refers to the condition and stresses involved before slaughtering. During ante-mortem inspection, animal is in live condition and performs normal routine of day before they are slaughtered.
- The purpose of ante-mortem inspection is to check the quality for slaughter only those animals that are healthy, safe from harmful chemical and drug residues, and capable of being converted into wholesome product for the consumer.
- Animals that exhibit abnormal signs must be withdraw from normal slaughter and separated for closer examination.



## **Ante-mortem inspections are based on:**

- Presence and extent of any signs of disease.
- The presence and extent of any conditions that may result in the rejection of the carcass or its parts as a source of human food.
- The presence of excitement
- Any disturbed activity.
- The presence of any disability.
- The treatment or exposure of the animals to drugs, chemicals, biological substances or radioactive materials during feeding or in their normal environment.
- The extent of spoilage.



# Supplies for performing ante-mortem inspection

- Ante-mortem inspection format (for recording ante-mortem inspection findings).
- Thermometer,
- Bull rings,
- Pen/pencil, pad of paper and clipboard (for writing and taking any other notes),
- Suspect and Condemned tags.
- Tagging Pliers (these are used to attach the suspect and condemn tags to the animal's ear).
- Reject/Retain tag (to be attached to areas of livestock pens to show that they are rejected because they didn't meet requirements and therefore did not pass inspection).

# Ante-mortem inspection methodology



- Ante-mortem inspection should take place within 24 hours of arrival of animals at the slaughterhouse and less than 24 hours before they are slaughtered.
- Do not have dirty hide, skin or fleece conditions which cause risk of contamination of the meat.
- Are properly identified.
- Are accompanied by the relevant information from the holding/fattening areas.
- Are healthy, as far as the Veterinary Inspector can judge.
- Are in a satisfactory state as regards to welfare.



- Ante-mortem inspection consists of two parts:
  1. observation of animals at rest
  2. observation of animals in motion.
- It is important to inspect animals both at rest and in motion because certain abnormal signs such as labored breathing are easier to detect while the animals are at rest; whilst other abnormalities, such as lameness, may not be detected until the Veterinary Inspector observes the animals in



## **Observation at rest**

- When performing at-rest inspection, the Veterinary Inspector must position her/himself at various locations outside the pen. The Veterinary Inspector must observe all animals and note their general behavior while they are at rest.
- She/he should determine if any of the animals show abnormal behavioral patterns such as excessive excitability or severe depression.
- She/he should look at the heads, necks, sides, rumps, and legs of as many animals as possible and she/he should make a note of any abnormalities.





## **Observation in motion**

- When performing in-motion inspection of animals, the Veterinary Inspector should position her/himself outside the pen next to the open gate so that she/he can easily view the animals as they are driven by her/him.
- She/he should direct the establishment employee to move all animals slowly and individually out of the pen and then back and forth, while she/he observes each animal for abnormalities by viewing the head, neck, shoulder, flank, legs, and rump.
- If the pen size permits, she/he should position her/himself inside the pen and direct the establishment employee to move the animals past her/him both ways in the pen.



# Safety measures during inspection

- The Veterinary Inspector should never go into a pen of large livestock. This is especially true of a pen with a bull.
- The Veterinary Inspector should not make the mistake of performing in-motion inspection immediately behind a loose, swinging gate. As the animals are driven out of the pen, they could push against the swinging gate and force it against her/him.
- The Veterinary Inspector should not position her/himself in a corner or in a place.



# Ante mortem dispositions

➤ There are three possible outcomes, or dispositions, that follow ante-mortem inspection:

1. Passed for Slaughter
2. Suspect
3. Condemned



## **Passed for Slaughter**

The Veterinary Inspector should allow the animals that she/he has concluded to be free of the diseases.

- She/he should certify to the establishment by signing and dating the time of ante-mortem inspection on the ante-mortem inspection format.
- After inspecting animals, she/he should sign the format and write the time the animals received inspection.



## **Suspect**

Following points should be taken into consideration during inspection of Suspects.

- The identity of the animal must be maintained throughout the treatment period.
- The animal must be placed in a separate pen and the ante-mortem inspection format must be changed.
- Label the animal.
- Following the treatment, the veterinarian of the abattoir should follow up the animal and direct the Veterinary Inspector as to what action to take.



## **Condemned**

- If the Veterinary Inspector encounters a dead animal, she/he must make sure that there is an adequate control to prevent the animal from entering the slaughter process. She/he must take the following steps:
- Identify the animal as condemned with Suspect tag.
- Fill out an ante-mortem inspection format and write the words "Dead in Pens" or "Dead on Arrival" in the "Tagged For" space.
- Dispose off the animal properly.



## **1. Ante-mortem inspection format:**

The ante-mortem inspection format contains the following sections.

- **Slaughter at establishment**
- **Condemned or suspect tag**
- **Sex**
- **Tags**
- **Temperature**
- **Weight**
- **Remarks**



# References

1. **FAO, 2004.** Good Practices for the Meat Industry. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy.
2. **National Department of Agriculture, 2000.** Meat Inspectors Manual Red Meat. Private Bag X138, Pretoria, 0001 Republic of South Africa.
3. **NZFSA, 2006.** Animal Products (Ante-mortem and Post-mortem Examination of Mammals, Ostriches and Emu Intended for Human Consumption) Notice 2006. Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (New Zealand Food Safety Authority) Wellington.
4. **USDA, 1998.** Special Survey on Humane Slaughter and Ante-Mortem Inspection. Food Safety and Inspection Service. Technical Service Center, Omaha, NE.