



BEST PRACTICE PIG WELFARE AT THE ABATTOIR

STOCK HANDLING

- ▶ Handle pigs quietly and calmly
- ▶ Move pigs in groups at a walk
- ▶ Set up ramps and races before movement
- ▶ Avoid using electric prodders

Stock handling is the most crucial factor that impacts pig welfare at the abattoir. The last 15 minutes before stunning is critical for pig welfare. Pigs are in an unfamiliar environment, where their first natural instincts are to explore; hence good stockskills at this stage are important to ensure that the pigs are handled with care. A pig that is not handled well during this period will experience unnecessary distress and is much more likely to react badly to stunning. Increased stress at this time can also impact pork quality.

Pigs should be handled by stock people quietly and calmly. Pigs should be moved in small groups rather than individually. They shouldn't be made to walk faster than they do naturally.

Ramps and raceways should be set up before any movement and clear of any obstacles; there should be no hazards that may distract the pigs or cause them to slip, fall, or injure themselves.

Handling aids like stock boards and paddles should be used. Electric prodders should be avoided as they are highly stressful to pigs.

SOCIAL GROUPS

- ▶ Where possible, avoid mixing groups of pigs

Mixing may cause pigs to fight to establish a new social hierarchy adding to the stress of being separated from their social groups. Mixing pigs of different sexes increases the risk of undesirable behaviours like mounting.

Skin damage (cuts, scrapes, and bruising) may be more prevalent in mixed pigs.

RECOVERY & REST

- ▶ Allow pigs to rest after unloading

Resting allows pigs to recover from the stress of transport. Pigs should have unlimited access to water in lairage.

They should be protected from extreme weather and temperature changes. An ideal resting duration is 3 hrs, however, this is not always practical in commercial systems.

LAIRAGE DENSITY

- ▶ Do not overcrowd pigs in lairage

All pigs should have room to lie down and rest, stand up and turn around. They must have enough room to escape from any aggressive pigs in the same pen.

Additional space should be considered in warmer conditions to allow increased airflow.