

# Animal Handling Best Practices

## Audit Observations

Erika L. Voogd  
Voogd Consulting  
February 28, 2003



# Transportation & Unloading

- Measurement of Dead On Arrivals-driver performance
- Unloading performed by plant employees-not drivers
- Training of truckers on proper animal handling & policy
- Discourage use of hot shots by unloading personnel
- Perform random audits of truck unloading and report to trucking company and producer.

# Signs posted on Animal Handling Policy



# Sign Types Observed

- ◆ Company & Corporate Humane Handling
- ◆ Handling & Effect on Meat Quality
- ◆ Visitor Rules & Conduct
- ◆ Mission Statements including welfare

# Hog Unloading

- ◆ Added rubber flooring at the unloading docks to prevent slipping.
- ◆ Sun blocks installed in unloading area to reduce balking.
- ◆ Covered unloading to keep trucks shaded and animals comfortable.
- ◆ Internal employees perform unloading.
- ◆ Drape in front of tattoo operator to reduce animal visibility and balking.

# Suspect Animals

complete separation



# Holding Areas

- ◆ Covered area for holding animals to reduce mud and protect animals from weather extremes.
- ◆ Sprinkling of water (weather permitting) to cool hogs and prevent stress. Note: Don't mist, this increases humidity.
- ◆ Clean pens to reduce animal contamination due to manure.
- ◆ Holding areas cleaned before each fill.
- ◆ Establish a minimum rest time (2 hours).



# Holding Pens with sprinklers

## Don't overcrowd





# Holding Pens with Water



Pens covered to protect from sun  
and reduce mud



# Injured Animal Transport



# Crowd Pen & Lead Up Chute

- ◆ Modified crowd pen to allow non-funneled access versus narrowing into chutes.
- ◆ When animals balk, prod twice then move it out of chute (escape hatch or side doors) stun with captive bolt or let rest and bring through again.
- ◆ Looped belting on spring bars to minimize discomfort and bruising.

# Lead Up Chutes

- ◆ Raised flooring, angled upward, to prevent or minimize slipping.
- ◆ Overhead shower, wets the animals (calming & dust reduction) and also helps to rinse manure to prevent build-up and slipping.
- ◆ Rubber padding on chains of back-up bars.
- ◆ Cross hatching of flooring to reduce slipping.



# Driving Animals

- ◆ Witches cape used to drive hogs into crowd pen.
- ◆ Scrub brushed used to drive hogs into restrainer (not prods).
- ◆ Inactive “hot shot”.
- ◆ Shrouded “electric prod” with safety sleeve to minimize use.
- ◆ Rattle paddles (may be too noisy).

# Witches Capes



# Electric prod with safety sleeve





# Leather or Cloth Slappers



# Restrainer

- ◆ Be sure to utilize non-conductive hold down, to prevent “grounding” of electricity during stunning.
- ◆ Mark conveyor slats on either side to measure even rotation (this can prevent slipping and pinching).
- ◆ Inspect restrainer for slat breakage and wear.



# Restrainer hold down bars



# Restrainers

- ◆ Bright overhead lighting to encourage animal entry.
- ◆ Moveable side panels built along entry to reduce visibility of activity but allow contact.
- ◆ False flooring extended beyond restrainer entrance-
  - prevents view of shacklers
  - gives animal sense of solid footing

# Electrical Stunners

- ◆ Stunner switch replaced weekly; cords replaced monthly
- ◆ Contacts cleaned between animals and minimum of each break during the shift. (Utilize lockout/tagout)
- ◆ Computer tracking of stunning performance for duration of contact and absence of hot wanding.

# Electrical Stunners

- ◆ Operator visible stunner performance indicator lights to assess placement and duration of stun.
- ◆ Head only stun: wand placement is critical to assure electrical conductivity through the brain.
- ◆ Modify the contact area on two wand system, to increase the area of electrical contact on the head and body.

Expanded surface area to  
increase electrical conductivity





# Operator performance panels



# Electrical Stunner Maintenance

- ◆ Document stunner settings throughout the day to assure proper operation.
- ◆ Be sure to routinely inspect electrical contacts and wiring on wands and control buttons.
- ◆ Have reserve stunner wands available for operators
- ◆ Document nightly maintenance for maximum efficiency.

# Captive Bolt Performance

- ◆ Maintain captive bolt gun for use on downers and non-ambulatory animals. Gun should maximize stunner force.
- ◆ Downer cartridge guns can be rotated daily for continuous maintenance.
- ◆ Cartridge shells stored in dry air tight container to reduce humidity and maintain maximum fire efficiency and power.

# Bleeding

- ◆ It is critical to create a large enough cut to assure maximum bleed out in minimal time.
- ◆ Aim toward the tail, hole size is 1 1/4" minimum length.

# Plant & Corporate Commitment

- ◆ Your attendance at this conference!
- ◆ Designation of responsibility for animal handling (all employees).
- ◆ Internal plant audits by plant managers
- ◆ Expanded training programs with employee recognition for achievement.
- ◆ Training materials for truck drivers & growers.



# Management Commitment

## continued

- ◆ Installation of production monitoring equipment for management observation
- ◆ Corporate/plant policy on Humane Handling.
- ◆ Corporate reviews and performance of internal audits based on established criteria.
- ◆ Best practice sharing among plants and companies!

THANKS!!!!!!!

