



GENERAL CIRCULAR

This general circular contains important information from the NSW Food Authority for NSW licensed poultry and rabbit abattoirs.

Please take the time to read this information.

If you have any queries, please contact

NSW Food Authority Consumer & Industry Helpline on 1300 552 406

General Circular 02/2012

To: All licensed poultry and rabbit abattoirs in NSW
Subject: Management responsibilities for animal welfare at abattoirs

Background

The Authority has taken immediate action to cause a Sydney abattoir to cease operation due to animal welfare breaches.

Obligations and responsibilities of abattoirs in relation to animal welfare

All NSW poultry and rabbit abattoirs are reminded of their obligations and responsibilities to ensure the humane treatment of animals. All abattoirs operating in NSW are required to hold a licence and operate in accordance with the Food Regulation 2010.

Under the Food Regulation 2010, poultry abattoirs are required to comply with the Australian Standard for Construction of Premises and Hygienic Production of Poultry Meat for Human Consumption (AS 4465:2006).

This standard requires that 'holding areas for live poultry which shall be sheltered, paved, drained and provided with adequate ventilation and cooling and shall comply with the *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments*' (AS 4465:2006 Clause 5.1 (a)) and 'Where continuous mechanised slaughtering takes place, stunning equipment shall be provided in accordance with *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments*' (AS 4465:2006 Clause 6.3).

In relation to stunning and killing the standard requires that 'All poultry shall be humanely killed. Live poultry that are rejected at pre-slaughter examination shall be humanely killed in such a way to avoid contamination of floors, walls and equipment. Poultry for processing shall be:

(a) rendered unconscious by:

- (i) an electric current
- (ii) approved inert gas; or
- (iii) dislocation of the head, and must not regain consciousness before slaughter

or

(b) rendered unconscious or slaughtered by a method approved in writing by the controlling authority' (AS 4465:2006 Clause 15.24-15.26).

Under the Food Regulation 2010, rabbit abattoirs are required to comply with the Australian Standard for Hygienic Production of Rabbit Meat for Human Consumption (AS 4466:1998).

This standard requires that 'All animals presented for processing shall be: (a) handled in a humane manner and adequately rested; (b) held in secure and clean lairages with an adequate supply of drinking water prior to slaughter' (AS 4466:1998 Clause 10.2).

In relation to restraining and stunning the standard requires that 'Rabbits to be restrained by an approved method and electrically stunned or made unconscious and insensible to pain by other approved humane methods prior to bleeding' (AS 4466:1998 Clause 11.4).

The Authority will be ramping up unannounced inspections and audits of abattoirs in NSW starting immediately. Where Food Authority officers encounter animal welfare breaches, immediate enforcement action in accordance with the Authority's Compliance & Enforcement policy will be taken. This can include the ceasing of all operations, licence suspension or cancellation and/or fines of up to \$275,000. Any welfare breaches will also be reported to the Police and RSPCA.

02/2012 - Management responsibilities for animal welfare at poultry and rabbit abattoirs

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Page 2 of 3



The welfare of animals in NSW is protected under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTA) 1979 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (General) Regulation 2006 which are overseen by the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Under POCTA fines of up to \$110,000 or two years imprisonment apply for acts of aggravated acts of cruelty to animals.

Enquiries

Please direct any enquiries to:

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