

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE WELFARE OF PIGS

1. Food and Water

1.1 Food

All pigs should have access to a diet which is nutritionally adequate to maintain health and meet with the appropriate physiological requirements for growth, pregnancy, lactation and to withstand cold exposure. They should not be deprived of food for periods in excess of 24 hours.

In all systems of management continual assessment should be made of the needs of the pigs in relation to the amount, quality and continuity of food supply.

Pigs should be excluded, as far as possible, from toxic plants and other substances suspected of being deleterious to their health.

1.2 Water

Pigs should always have ad lib access to water. This is especially important in lactating sows.

Mechanical equipment controlling the delivery of water should be inspected regularly and frequently in hot weather and be maintained in good working order. It is essential that a water supply is maintained in freezing weather when pipes are liable to become frozen.

The quality of water provided should be adequate to maintain pig health. Drinking water which contains potentially toxic levels of salts, or other deleterious substances, should be monitored and managed to minimise deleterious effects.

2. Protection from Climatic Extremes

When pigs are to be kept under outdoor conditions some thought should be given to the selection of an appropriate breed with regard to the high wind chill factor frequently encountered in the Falklands. An adequate number of well maintained shelters should be provided to protect the pigs from wind and rain and these should contain some form of dry bedding. This is especially important for sows close to farrowing and for sows with piglets.

During the Summer months an adequate number of shelters to provide shade and prevent sunburn are necessary.

3. Housing

Pigs which are housed should have a clean bedded sleeping area and a separate exercise/dunging area that is easy to clean. There should be adequate lighting to allow easy inspection of the pigs and adequate ventilation to maintain a wholesome atmosphere.

There must be sufficient space in the pen to allow all the pigs to lie down at the same time and move around freely. Flooring should be of a non-slip material.

The construction of the pen, water troughs and food troughs should be designed to avoid injury to the pigs. Sharp projections must be avoided.

4. Supervision and Handling

Pigs should be inspected at least once daily to confirm that they are in a sound and healthy condition.

Pigs should be handled quietly with the minimum of excitement. Dogs should not be used. The use of sticks should be kept to a minimum. A flat "pig board" is useful for both control and operator protection. Pigs should not be prodded with sharpened sticks or pieces of metal.

Electric goads should only be used on the hindquarters of pigs over six months old and only then when the way ahead of the animal is clear.

5. Management Practices

5.1 General

Restraint should be the minimum necessary to perform management procedures efficiently.

Procedures and practices that cause pain should not be carried out if painless and practical methods of husbandry can be adopted to achieve the same result.

Any injury, illness or distress observed should be treated at the earliest opportunity. If the stockman is unsure of the best treatment then veterinary assistance should be sought promptly.

5.2 Castration

Castration without the use of local anaesthetic should be confined to animals under 2 months of age. Animals over this age should be castrated only under the guidance of a veterinary surgeon.

5.3 Tail Docking

Tail docking of young piglets should not be carried out routinely. If it is found to be necessary it should be performed before one week of age.

5.4 Tooth Clipping

If tooth clipping of new-born piglets is found to be necessary it should be carried out as soon after birth as possible and certainly within the first 24 hours of life.

5.5 Mating

Gilts should be mated only when they have reached a sufficient size and maturity.

5.6 Farrowing

Sows should be checked as frequently as possible coming up to farrowing so that difficulties can be promptly detected and attended to.

Any obviously deformed piglets or small piglets considered unlikely to survive should be humanely euthanased by a sharp blow to the head.

6. Health

Sick, injured or diseased pigs should be treated promptly and appropriately or be humanely slaughtered. If the stockman is unsure of the best course of action then veterinary advice should be sought.

7. Humane Destruction of Pigs

The preferred methods of euthanasia or slaughter for home consumption are shooting using a free bullet or captive bolt pistol applied to the frontal region.

Alternatively a twelve bore shot gun can be used holding the muzzle approximately 2 inches from the head.

Small young piglets can be euthanased by a sharp blow to the head.

An animal stunned with a captive bolt pistol must be immediately bled out by severing the major blood vessels by inserting a knife into the thoracic inlet at the base of the neck.