

MOBILE SLAUGHTER:

An alternative to long-distance animal transport?



Anually, billions of cattle, sheep, goats, horses, pigs and poultry are loaded on trucks and trailers to be sent by road to an abattoir. Over many years, the slaughter of animals has been centralized to fewer and bigger abattoirs resulting in longer journeys and larger vehicles used. Animal transportation puts animals at risk of poor welfare due to stress. Furthermore, incorrect handling during loading and unloading as well as poor vehicle standard and driving poses additional risks to poor welfare.

During transport, animals can be exposed to unfamiliar individuals, unknown environmental conditions such as walking on ramps, unfamiliar sounds, new smells, vibrations etc. Feed and water facilities are different and handling staff is unfamiliar. Not only is animal welfare hampered by animal transportation, but meat quality may be negatively affected and risk of spread of disease increased.

With the use of on-farm slaughter, these risks can largely be avoided. Animal transport is eliminated as well as overnight lairage at abattoirs – which is another important, and growing, issue. On-farm slaughter can either be performed on a small stationary plant, with the use of a mobile slaughter unit or by stunning and killing on farm with a transport of the carcass to a nearby plant for further processing.

Rules on slaughter of animals need to be updated and amended. They need to take into account the development of modern, animal welfare-friendly on-farm slaughter methods and modern technologies to ensure proper stunning, food security and sustainable waste management.

Using image transfer to assess meat hygiene instead of vets' checks at the abattoir will significantly reduce costs for small scale slaughter. Possibilities to stun and bleed animals on farm for further processing in a nearby abattoir would also make small-scale slaughter more economic and more competitive. More research is needed and as a result, a revision of existing legislation.

Reference: Hultgren, J. (2018) "Is livestock transport a necessary practice? Mobile slaughter and on-farm stunning and killing before transport to slaughter," CAB Reviews.

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