



# IS THE ANIMAL FIT TO PROCESS?

**CATTLE**

**ASSESS, DON'T GUESS!**

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide has been developed to help you decide if an animal is fit to be processed at red meat processing establishments within Australia.

Cattle should be checked for their fitness to load or other transport related problems at the time of unloading, undergo ante mortem inspection within 24 hours of slaughter and be observed for the signs of emergency animal diseases while at the abattoir.

The Livestock Processing Industry is committed to ensuring that high standards of animal welfare are implemented, maintained, and verified. The Livestock Processing Industry also aims to achieve continual improvement in animal welfare across the livestock supply chain.

The Industry Animal Welfare Standards for Livestock Processing Establishments (The Standards) were developed to meet community and processor expectations for the management of animals at Australian livestock processing establishments.

The Standards provide information for all people responsible for the care, management and slaughter of livestock at processing establishments. Animal welfare at abattoirs is the responsibility of establishment management.

This *Is The Animal Fit To Process* guide will help abattoir personnel meet their business obligations under The Standards.

# NATIONAL LAND TRANSPORT STANDARD



According to the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines - Land Transport Standard of Livestock 2012*, an animal is not fit for the intended journey if it is:

- Unable to walk on its own by bearing weight on all legs or
- Severely emaciated or
- Visibly dehydrated or
- Blind in both eyes or
- Showing visible signs of severe injury or distress or
- Suffering from conditions that are likely to increase pain and suffering as a result of the transport process or

- Known to be or visually assessed to be near (within two weeks) of parturition as specified in the species requirements, unless time off water and journey is less than 4 hours duration to another property.

All people involved in livestock processing have a duty of care to the animals they are responsible for and must take steps to minimise risks to the animal's welfare.

Livestock should be assessed for their fitness to load or other transport related problems at the point of unloading or shortly thereafter as soon as practically possible. Animals that have been injured or disabled during transportation, unloading or handling must undergo immediate emergency slaughter or be humanely destroyed and condemned.

# PREPARING AN ANIMAL WELFARE INCIDENT REPORT

Check Meat & Livestock Australia's *Is the Animal Fit to Load?* for examples of unfit to load conditions.

If livestock arrive at the abattoir with unfit to load conditions, it is the responsibility of abattoir management to notify the relevant state authority.

- Export abattoirs should complete the Australian Government Animal Welfare Incident Report form.

- Domestic abattoirs should check with their relevant authority for the information required. At a minimum, the following information should be reported:
  - Abattoir contact information
  - Date and time of the incident
  - The nature of the incident, including photos and/or video of affected animals
  - The property of origin of the animals, including the PIC and a photocopy of the NVD
  - If the incident is thought to be transport related, details of the transport company.

# ANTE MORTEM INSPECTION



Ante mortem inspection should be done within 24 hours of slaughter.

Ante mortem inspection has two parts:

1. Examining animals before slaughter to identify and separate animals that show signs of a disease or other abnormality.
2. Deciding what to do with the animals that show signs of a disease or other abnormality. Some of these decisions are a matter of degree and for the judgement of the veterinary officer, meat inspector or stock person. If in doubt, ask a more experienced person for help.

When carrying out ante mortem inspection you must:

- Observe animals for the presence of a suspect emergency or notifiable disease. Refer to page 12 for more information on emergency diseases.

Contact your State Department of Agriculture for a list of notifiable diseases in your state.

- Prevent the slaughter of animals that show signs of a condition or disease that will make the carcass or carcass parts unfit for human consumption.
- Separate animals that show signs of, or are suspected of having, a disease or condition that require them to be slaughtered separately so detailed post mortem inspection can be carried out.
- Prevent animals that are grossly contaminated with faeces, dirt, dust or other material entering the slaughter floor.
- Ensure high levels of animal welfare are maintained at all times.





## DISPOSITION OR OUTCOME

- Passed for unconditional slaughter
- Passed for restricted slaughter
- Passed for emergency slaughter
- Withheld for further treatment (if warranted)
- Rejected from slaughter / humanely destroyed and condemned

## IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER!

Prior to arriving at an establishment, animals will have been subjected to variable periods of feed and water restrictions, transport and handling. Animals sold through saleyards are likely to have experienced significantly more handling and transport than those animals sold direct to the processing establishment. Workers must use low stress handling techniques, particularly as livestock may be fatigued from the journey. Extra care must be taken with sick or injured animals. Prodders must be used very minimally and not on animals less than three months of age, on animals in confined spaces or on sensitive parts of the animal (eyes, face, genitalia).

# ANIMALS NOT PASSED FOR UNCONDITIONAL SLAUGHTER

<p><b>Restricted Slaughter</b></p>	<p>The aim of restricted slaughter is to alert the processor and inspection staff to the need to pay special attention so as to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify animals with a disease or condition that at post mortem inspection could result in condemnation of that carcass or carcass parts.</li> <li>• Identify animals with a disease or condition, or that have been exposed to a disease or condition, which means that carcass or parts of it may be unfit for human consumption.</li> <li>• Identify animals contaminated to the extent that the animal will be rejected from slaughter without modified slaughtering or dressing procedures to enable controlled handling of the carcass through slaughter and the dressing area.</li> </ul> <p>Restricted slaughter lots are usually slaughtered at the end of the production run. Restricted slaughter does not include animals that are in pain or suffering</p>	
<p><b>Emergency Slaughter</b></p>	<p>The aim of emergency slaughter is to prevent the suffering of animals that have become injured or disabled during transportation, unloading or handling. Animals passed for emergency slaughter can be slaughtered in the yards or truck, or prioritised for immediate slaughter if they can walk bearing weight on all legs.</p>	
<p><b>Withheld for further Treatment</b></p>	<p>The aim of withholding animals for further treatment is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give animals appropriate treatment or time so the animal can be passed as fit for slaughter.</li> <li>• Prevent unnecessary condemnation.</li> <li>• Prevent heavily soiled animals entering the food chain.</li> <li>• Prevent unnecessary contamination of animals, dressing areas and processing personnel.</li> </ul> <p>At many goat and sheep processing plants withholding animals for further treatment may not be feasible.</p>	
<p><b>Rejected from slaughter / condemned</b></p>	<p>Animals rejected for slaughter are animals that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moribund.</li> <li>• Affected with a disease or condition to the extent that the carcass will be condemned at post mortem inspection.</li> </ul>	

## IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER!

Animals that are injured or disabled on arrival or at the processing establishment, and/or showing signs of pain or suffering must be humanely destroyed at the first opportunity by a competent person or prioritised emergency slaughter if the animal can walk bearing weight on all legs.

## SICK, WEAK OR INJURED ANIMALS

A sick, weak or injured animal may be:

- **Deemed 'suspect' and slaughtered under restrictions** that prevent unacceptable contamination of the processing floor, and that allow more detailed post-mortem inspection.
- **Prioritised for emergency slaughter**, to prevent the suffering of animals that have become injured or disabled during transportation, unloading or handling. For animals identified for emergency slaughter, the procedure must be carried out promptly using approved methods.
- **Withheld from slaughter** pending treatment (if warranted), or recovery from their condition.
- **Rejected as unfit for slaughter**, humanely destroyed and then disposed of appropriately. Moribund animals must be humanely destroyed on the spot (prior to being moved and without delay.)



## ANIMALS NOT PASSED FOR UNCONDITIONAL SLAUGHTER

### **INJURIES (broken leg, severe wounds, unable to stand)**



**What To Do**  
(depending on severity)

- **Emergency Slaughter**  
or
- **Reject / Condemn**

**Take photos and/or video**  
of the affected animal(s)  
**Complete an animal**  
welfare incident report  
**Contact the relevant state**  
authority

## ANIMALS NOT PASSED FOR UNCONDITIONAL SLAUGHTER

### SEVERE EMACIATION



#### What To Do

- **Reject / Condemn**

Take photos and/or video of the affected animal(s)

Complete an animal welfare incident report

Contact the relevant state authority

# ANIMALS NOT PASSED FOR UNCONDITIONAL SLAUGHTER

## SOILED (Heavy)



Light



Medium



Heavy



Heavy

### What To Do (Heavy Soiling)

- With hold for washing or
- Restricted slaughter at the end of the run

## IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER!

**Call the Emergency Animal  
Disease Hotline 1800 675 888**

**Notify the On-Plant Veterinarian,  
Senior Meat Inspector or Plant  
Manager of any animals that  
display signs of an Emergency  
Animal Disease.**

# EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASES

If you suspect that a consignment of animals has an Emergency Animal Disease:

- **Isolate the animals:** Isolate all animals that are suspected to be infected, or that may have had contact with suspect animals.
- **Report it!** Notify the On-Plant Veterinarian, Senior Meat Inspector or Plant Manager of any animals that display signs of an Emergency Animal Disease.
- **Restrain all dogs and working horses:** Ensure that all dogs and working horses on the establishment are properly restrained.
- **Stop:** Halt all movement into, out of and within the lairage pens.

- **Record:** Ensure that the details of lesions (including photographs) are recorded. Records should also include the name and contact details of the owner of the affected animal(s) and the livestock transporter, as well as the number of animals in the lot or the number that have come from that property of origin.

Early intervention is critical in a pest or disease outbreak. If you suspect a pest or disease outbreak or have seen something unusual and you're not sure whether it's an exotic pest or disease - report it. Small signs may be an early indication that something's wrong.

# EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASE SIGNS

Potential Emergency Disease	Animals affected	Coughing	Drooling	Discharge from eyes and/or nose	Scouring	Lame	Unwilling to stand	Abnormal behaviour	Emaciated	Skin lesions	Found dead
Anthrax	Cattle, goats and sheep										✓*
Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)	Cattle							✓	✓		
Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)	Cattle, goats and sheep		✓			✓	✓	✓ (smacking lips)			
Lumpy Skin Disease	Cattle	✓		✓		✓ (swollen joints)	✓			✓ (raised, swollen nodules)	
Rift Valley Fever	Cattle, goats and sheep			✓	✓	✓	✓				
Vesicular Stomatitis	Cattle, goats and sheep		✓			✓	✓	✓ (smacking lips)			

\* Blood may be present around the mouth, nose or anus.

If you see something suspicious, notify the On-Plant Veterinarian, Senior Meat Inspector or Plant Manager.

**ASSESS, DON'T GUESS!**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Australian Meat Processor  
Corporation

Suite 1 Level 5  
110 Walker Street  
North Sydney NSW 2060  
02 8908 5500

Emergency Animal  
Disease Hotline  
(1800 675 888)

### State animal welfare contact details

#### QLD

**Biosecurity Queensland - DAF**  
Phone: 13 25 23  
Email: [callweb@daff.qld.gov.au](mailto:callweb@daff.qld.gov.au)

#### NSW

**Animal Welfare Inspectoral office - NSW  
Department of Primary Industries**  
Phone: 02 9872 0570  
Email: [animal.welfare@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:animal.welfare@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

#### VIC

**Department of Economic Development,  
Jobs, Transport and Resources**  
Phone: 136 186  
Email: [aw.complaint@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:aw.complaint@ecodev.vic.gov.au)

#### TAS

**RSPCA - Inspectorate**  
Phone: 1300 139 947  
Email: [inspector@rspccatas.org.au](mailto:inspector@rspccatas.org.au)

#### WA

**Department of Agriculture and Food  
(DAFWA)**  
Livestock Compliance Unit  
Phone: 08 9366 2320  
Email: [livestock.compliance@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:livestock.compliance@agric.wa.gov.au)

#### SA

**Biosecurity SA**  
Website:  
[http://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-health/contact\\_us](http://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-health/contact_us)

#### NT

**Department of Primary Industry and  
Fisheries**  
Animal Welfare Branch  
Phone: 1300 720 386  
Email: [animalwelfare@nt.gov.au](mailto:animalwelfare@nt.gov.au)

