



Question to the Centre

Reference of the query: 003-2020

Query received October 20, 2020

Date of admissibility: October 20th, 2020

Reply sent: October 28th, 2020

Background context provided by the solicitor

None

Questions and answers from the Centre

[On Question 1 \(head-only stunning\):](#)

Question: In the context of small slaughterhouses (i.e. less than 150.000 birds per year as referred to in Article 17(6) of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009, is there on the EU market today electrical stunning devices that comply with the requirement for recording as laid down in Paragraph 4.1 of Annex II to the Regulation? If yes could you provide a range of references and prices?

Answer

There is equipment that complies with the requirements for recording the key parameters like:

- <http://www.gozlin.it/pollame-teq002.php?lingua=2> (around 2100€).
- https://d1lgrfe63m2189.cloudfront.net/media/cache/product_zoom/etourdisseur-electrique-dit-stel-pince-a-volaille-pour-etourdisseur-electrique-dit-pinv-DITSTELDITPINV-DITSTELDITPINV-4.png
- <http://palnikidekarskie.com/stz-6-ii-en/?lang=en> (around 8000 €)

Furthermore, a system for recording electrical parameters can be installed on already developed equipment by specific companies for a reasonable price (3000€- 5000€).

Question: Apart from possible reasons under point 1 (absence of available equipment or too costly), since Annex II had a transitional period of 10 years before being applicable (see Article 29 (1)) and started to apply for all slaughterhouses in December 2019, do you find any technical reason for operators not being able to comply today? If yes, could you explain which ones?

Answer: To the knowledge of the Centre there is no other reasons.

Question: Provided that the stunning equipment must display the details of the electrical key parameters for head only stunning (according to Table 2 of Annex I these parameters include: minimum current, voltage, maximum frequency, minimum time of exposure) do you think that it is technically and practically feasible for a video camera to record these parameters and make them easily verifiable later within a year for the competent authorities?

Answer: The Centre does not have specific skill in video camera devices but, providing that the ad hoc material is used, video recording of key parameters should be feasible. Files can be registered during one year and kept on external support. Check of video records of one-year activity by competent authority should be feasible providing that they dedicate sufficient resources (time and personnel) to visualise all videos.



Question: If yes, which technical conditions should be associated to the use of video camera in order to comply with the requirement for recording as set up in Paragraph 4.1 of Annex II?

Answer: A video camera should make the recording clearly visible and save on a specific support (like SD card), but to our knowledge no audible warning system exists to detect from a camera record when the exposure time falls below the required level.

On Question 2 (decapitation):

I would like to have your technical opinion on the draft below:

“In absence of possibility to intervene in case of signs of recovery, decapitation should not be allowed as a bleeding technique after stunning. Decapitation as a bleeding technique (when the animal is still alive) does not allow compliance with the requirement of Article 5 (1) which states that:

Business operators shall ensure that persons responsible for stunning or other nominated staff carry out regular checks to ensure that the animals do not present any signs of consciousness or sensibility in the period between the end of

the stunning process and death.(...)

When the outcome of the checks indicates that an animal is not properly stunned, the person in charge of stunning shall immediately take the appropriate measures (...)

This article should be read in conjunction with the provision of Article 3 (2) (d) which indicates that business operators shall take the necessary measures to ensure that animals do not show signs of avoidable pain and fear or exhibit abnormal behaviour.

If the decapitation still allows to detect signs of consciousness like wing flapping or muscle tone, it does not allow the operator to take appropriate measure to ensure that animals have definitively loss consciousness until death.

In the EFSA opinion on monitoring procedures at slaughterhouses for poultry (2013) the scientists provide toolboxes for waterbath and gas stunning. In both cases the monitoring should be performed after stunning but also during bleeding. Therefore, the risk of regaining consciousness during bleeding cannot be completely excluded.

An exemption could be considered in case the stunning method is highly reliable so that checks on stunning would not be necessary as foreseen in the provision of Article 5 (4) of the Regulation. This would require an EFSA opinion.”

Centre's answer:

Bleeding by decapitation ensures the section of both carotid arteries and therefore proper bleeding. Also, it facilitates the control of bleeding (e.g. in slaughterhouses with high line speed).

Checking for indicators of consciousness that normally are carried out on the head (e.g. corneal reflex or spontaneous blinking) will not be possible, and other indicators normally assessed on the body (e.g. breathing, wing flapping, body movement) will not reflect the state of consciousness if the head is separated from the body.



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If decapitation is performed for bleeding purposes, it is critical to monitor unconsciousness and ensure that all animals are unconscious before decapitation (i.e. between the stunner and the rotating knife), as well as to reduce the “stun to bleed” interval only for the time needed for the monitoring of consciousness. This means that there has to be enough time and enough physical space between the stunner and the knife for someone to detect any signs consciousness and actually re-stun the animal. Furthermore, it means that a person has to be dedicated to the surveillance of unconsciousness, contrasting the common procedure sometimes used where one person supervises that both the stunning and bleeding are done correctly.

The Centre considers that the checks on stunning should be carried out always regardless of the reliability of the stunning method.

If waterbath stunning is used, the parameters of the regulation should be used and the frequency should not exceed 600 Hz (EFSA opinion, 2019), in order to avoid electro immobilisation instead of unconsciousness.

If controlled atmosphere stunning gas is used, poultry should be dead when exiting the stunner, but consciousness should still be checked in any case.

Reference:

Slaughter of animals: poultry, EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW), EFSA, Journal 2019; 17(11):5849