Developing a Robust Systematic Approach To Humane Handling

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Why Implement a Systematic Approach to Humane Handling?

- FSIS Federal Register Notice - September 9, 2004
  - FSIS notified establishments that they may choose to develop and implement a robust systematic approach
    - FSIS sees merits and is beneficial. Can also meet the requirements for the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA) and Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA)
  - FSIS Directive 6900.2
    - Instructions for inspection personnel to determine if the plant’s plan is robust
    - Can your plan function in the event of egregious inhumane handling?
  - Guidance documents are available on FSIS and AMI websites
Establishments Must Commit To Proper Humane Handling

- Humane handling system success comes from a buy-in by all departments
- A systematic approach to achieve continuous improvement in animal welfare

Animal Welfare Mission:
100% Compliant 100% of the Time

And it’s the right thing to do!!
Animal Handling with a HACCP-Like Approach

- Conduct a humane handling risk assessment and process flow
- Form an Animal Handling Committee
  - This approach helps gain plant buy-in to the program
- Document reassessments or changes to the plan
- However, this is not HACCP. It is not a ‘regulatory or a regulated’ program.

THIS IS YOUR PROGRAM!
Keys to Developing a Robust Systematic Approach

**Step 1** - Develop an animal handling flow chart

**Step 2** - Conduct an initial assessment (risk analysis)

**Step 3** - Develop prerequisite programs to support your systematic approach

**Step 4** - Critically evaluate handling methods and facility design to ensure they are appropriate

**Step 5** - Develop employee training programs and system evaluations

**Step 6** - Reassess the system when deviations are identified and periodically even before deviations occur
Step 1 - Develop Your Flow Chart

- Breakdown of each step in your animal handling processes from animal arrival to after stunning.
- Use a team approach instead of a single individual to ensure all steps are included.
  - Operations
  - QA
  - Maintenance
Step 2 - Initial Assessment

- Conduct the risk analysis
- Determine at each flow chart step under what circumstances livestock at your facility may encounter or be subjected to:
  - Excitement
  - Discomfort
  - Accidental Injury
- At each step in the flow chart where there is a determined risk of excitement, discomfort or accidental injury:
  - What controls can be implemented to mitigate those risks at each step?
Step 3 – Supporting Programs

- Write Standard Operating Procedures for humane handling
  - This way every individual that handles livestock knows exactly what to do and what not to do.
  - Include corrective actions to take if a deviation occurs.
  - Examples include:
    - Animal receiving
    - Yards stunning program
    - Appropriate prod usage
    - Entrapped livestock
    - Slow or Non-ambulatory handling
    - Incompatible animal segregation
    - Ammunition storage and testing
    - Knock box/restrainer stunning
    - Feed and watering policy
    - Facility repair program
    - Emergency plan
    - Pen stocking density
    - Stun gun preventative maintenance
Step 4 – Evaluate

- Assess critical areas for monitoring employee performance and animal movement
- Areas where issues may arise include:
  - Trucks waiting to unload
  - Trucks unloading
  - Drive alleys
  - Stockyards
  - Drive from the yard to the staging areas
  - Staging areas before and up to the stun
  - Stunning and bleed
- Humane handling performance should be monitored through a systematic approach
  - Collect, summarize and review data to ensure system is in control
  - Implement immediate corrective actions as necessary
  - Including preventive measures
Step 4 – Evaluate

- The program should include the frequency of auditing
- Conduct your audit according to current AMI guidelines
- Use a trained auditor
- Score specific locations unique to your facility
  1) Prod use or driving devices if used
  2) Slips and falls – unloading
  3) Vocalization
  4) Slips and falls – at lairage and staging
  5) Stunning - may have multiple methods
  6) Insensibility - at stun and bleed out
  7) Acts of abuse
  8) Access to water
Step 5 – Training and Evaluation

- Develop a schedule for:
  - training for all applicable employees
  - animal handling committee meetings
  - third party audits
  - conducting regular internal self-audits
    - Include both transportation and plant handling
- Document and develop training sessions that all staff understand. 9 CFR 313 - Humane Slaughter of Livestock
- Make employees know the ramifications for willful acts of abuse
- Include video training:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcqqE3H5vQ4
Step 6 – Reassess and Act

- The final steps in the robust systematic approach to humane handling is validating and reviewing results of internal audit results.

- Companies should also identify priority areas for improvement based upon a total benchmark evaluation of the humane handling program.

- Take note of the common mistakes made by those charged with animal handling and make sure that they are eliminated from the process.

- Of course, the ultimate success will be determined by being compliant 100% of the time.
Step 6 – Reassess and Act

- Companies should also identify priority areas for improvement based upon a total benchmark evaluation of the program.
- Periodically evaluate the entire animal welfare system.
- Remember to RESPOND to your evaluations!
- Always maintain documentation!

Ultimate success of your program is from the management staff!
Customization of Your Systematic Approach

- Customizing a program also includes receiving input from the people that handle the animals.
  - What do they think? These team members are the ones who will be working with livestock on a daily basis.
- This approach gives them ownership of the program and the empowerment to make the system work.
- When the systematic approach comes together, the results are significant.
Pitfalls and Mistakes

Avoid operating in a reactive, firefighting mode with little or no effective planning.
This creates unnecessary crises and downtime that may be costly to the company.

Tips for avoiding humane handling mistakes:

- Your systematic approach is a changing program just like the HACCP plan.
- Do not assume that your employees can automatically handle livestock and equipment.
  - They may need additional training and refresher courses from time to time.
- Develop an individualized training plan whenever possible.
  - Base it on the individual persons level of expertise.
Pitfalls and Mistakes

- Use expert recommendations as a starting point for a systematic robust humane handling program
- **Be sure senior managers drive the system**
  - They are the individuals who will create a culture of proper humane handling
  - These leaders should be foremost familiar with the program and practices
- Keep manuals, documents, procedures and other critical information readily available

This is valuable information – ORGANIZE IT!

*Successful organizations do this seriously*
Conclusion

With your robust systematic approach to humane handling your company will obtain a proactive planned animal welfare program.

*The program will aid and limit animal welfare issues and mistakes.*

Provide assurances to your customers your commitment to proper animal welfare.

Most of all, it’s the right thing to do for your company, your employees and the animals that are responsible for your livelihood.
Questions?