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**NAMI Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines & Audit Guide**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**Current as of May 14, 2021**

**Questions on Chapter 2, Transportation Practices**

**All Species**

**1. Question:** Is bedding required for cull dairy cows?

**Answer:** The 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide are not prescriptive of bedding practices (i.e. how much bedding to provide and when it should be provided) and bedding provision is considered a secondary criterion in the NAMI audit tool because bedding can become compacted during transport and difficult to measure upon arrival at the plant. A secondary criterion does not impact the pass or fail of the audit, but should be documented as part of the report.

As stated in the 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide, trucks must follow the plant's policy on bedding provision and will be audited against the establishment's written policy. Some regions transport cattle without bedding due to warm climates; this must be noted in the plant's policy for bedding to demonstrate compliance. Furthermore, some jurisdictions may have a regulatory requirement for bedding and trucks must demonstrate compliance with such requirements.

**Questions on Chapter 4, Transportation Audit Guidelines**

**All Species**

**2. Question:** What is the recommended number of trailers to include in the transportation audit?

**Answer:** The 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide states that no less than two trailers and no more than five trailers should be assessed.

**3. Question:** Is the audit failed if a truck driver who is not a plant employee beats and kicks animals?

**Answer:** Yes. The 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide states: "Any willful act of abuse is grounds for an audit failure."

**4. Question:** When evaluating falls or electric prod use during the transportation audit, if five trailers are observed, but only 85 animals were unloaded from the five trailers, should the auditor expand the sample size to evaluate whether or not one or two falls indicates a systemic issue, or just a one-time occurrence?

**Answer:** Chapter 5, Section 3 of the January 2021 Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines and Audit Guide addresses audit scoring with small data sets, and uses the example of stunning. The concept can be applied to falls and electric prod use as well. Sometimes,

especially in small plants, only a small number of animals (in this case, 85) can be observed during an audit. If passing or failing the audit is based on a single small data set, one missed stun, or one extra fall or prod, should be permitted. However, on pooled data, a passing score should be maintained.

**5. Question:** Will a plant fail on falling if 5% of the animals fall during truck unloading?

**Answer:** Yes. Slips and falls are scored during truck unloading. The 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide states: “Good animal welfare and quiet calm handling is impossible if animals slip or fall on the floor. All areas where animals walk should have non-slip footing. Animals should be observed during all phases of handling and if slipping or falling is observed, steps should be taken to correct the problem.”

**6. Question:** A pig falls down and becomes non-ambulatory on the unloading ramp. The truck driver drags it out of the way so that he can unload the rest of the pigs. Is the audit failed?

**Answer:** Yes. Dragging a sensible animal is an act of abuse and is grounds for automatic audit failure. Dragging a sensible animal is also a violation of the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. Animals must be rendered insensible with a stunning device BEFORE dragging. **Note:** In the United States, a sensible animal can be carefully rolled onto a sled or other device for moving it. This is not allowed in Canada; the non-ambulatory animal must be euthanized where it lies.

### Cattle

**7. Question:** Should compartments be gated for cull dairy cattle?

**Answer:** The 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide states that compartments should be gated for swine, sheep, and veal calves. Cull dairy cattle and market cattle are only gated under special circumstances. Refer to your specific industry transportation guidelines for more information.

## Questions on Chapter 5, Slaughter Audit Guidelines

### All Species

**8. Question:** Where should falls be scored?

**Answer:** As stated in the January 2021 Guidelines, score falls in the areas where animals are being actively handled. This includes the drive alley, crowd tub, and single-file chute during active handling. In plants that use a stun box or stunning pen that does not have a conveyor, falls should be scored in the stun box or pen during stunning as well.

**9. Question:** Does falling down in the stun box count when it occurs BEFORE stunning or religious slaughter?

**Answer:** Yes. If more than 1% of the animals fall, this is a failing fall score. Boxes that are designed to cause sensible animals to fall down (trip boxes) should never be used. They would receive a failing score.

**10. Question:** If an animal slips and its rear end touches the floor, is that scored as a fall?

**Answer:** Yes. A fall is scored if any part of the body touches the floor during handling. The falling score is failed if more than 1% of the animals fall.

**11. Question:** Where do you score vocalization?

**Answer:** As stated in the January 2021 Guidelines, score vocalization for cattle during all phases of handling: in the crowd-pen, lead-up chute, and restrainer/stun box. Score

vocalization for pigs only in the restrainer, stun box, or group stunning pen, because it is impossible to count individual vocalizations in a crowd pen or lead-up alley. Do not score vocalization in sheep.

**12. Question:** If cattle, pigs, or sheep vocalize (moo, bellow, squeal or baa) in the stockyards (lairage) does this count on the vocalization score?

**Answer:** No. Vocalization scoring is done in the following places:

- Pigs - restrainer, stun box, stun pen, and bleed rail
- Cattle - restrainer, stun box, religious slaughter box. Vocalization scoring is also done while cattle are entering the stun box or religious slaughter box. Vocalization caused by electric prod use is scored. For cattle, all vocalizations in the stun box, religious slaughter box, or restrainer count. In the lead up chute (race) and crowd pen, cattle vocalizations only count during actual movement of the cattle by a person.
- Sheep - no vocalization scoring is done

**13. Question:** Where do you score electric prod use?

**Answer:** In all plant sizes, score electric prod use in all parts of the handling system where prods are used, not just at the entrance to the restrainer/stun box. Where ever there is a prod, scoring should be done.

**14. Question:** Regarding evaluation of animals on the bleed rail, is the term “shackling” synonymous with “hoisting”? Specifically, if an animal is shackled but not technically hoisted and has signs of sensibility, is this considered a ‘sensible animal on the rail’?

**Answer:** Shackling and hoisting are not synonymous terms, but, as stated in the January 2021 Guidelines, animals must be completely insensible before any other slaughter procedure is performed, including shackling.

**15. Question:** A plant employee starts to skin the head of an animal that has blinking eyes. Is the audit failed?

**Answer:** Yes. This is an automatic audit failure. The 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide states, “There is a zero tolerance for beginning any procedure like skinning the head or leg removal on any animal that shows signs of return to sensibility.” This applies to both conventional and religious slaughter. Animals with eyes that do spontaneous natural blinking are sensible.

**16. Question:** An animal’s rear leg is kicking while it is hung on the bleed rail. Is the audit failed?

**Answer:** No. Kicking may occur in totally insensible animals; it is just a reflex. People evaluating insensibility must look at the head. Refer to the NAMI 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide for detailed instructions on determining insensibility.

**17. Question:** A steer rears up and knocks the electric prod out of an employee’s hand, and the end of the prod accidentally hits another steer in the eye. Is the audit failed for an act of abuse?

**Answer:** No. The 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide clearly states that acts of abuse have to be done intentionally. The guideline states under core criterion 1: “Any willful act of abuse is grounds for automatic audit failure. 1) dragging a conscious, non-ambulatory animal; 2) intentionally applying prods to sensitive parts of the animal like the eyes, ears, nose or rectum; 3) deliberate slamming of gates on livestock; 4) purposeful driving of livestock on top of one another; 5) hitting/beating an animal. Note any such acts observed.”

**18. Question:** The animal moves its head and the captive bolt stunner is shot in the air. Is this counted as a second shot?

**Answer:** No. A stunner shot that shoots in the air does not count. If the bolt of the stunner touches or partially penetrates the animal, it is counted as a missed shot.

**19. Question:** How do you score plants that routinely shoot bulls, bison, and other heavy livestock twice? Do they fail?

**Answer:** No. To verify that 96% or more are rendered insensible with one shot from a captive bolt, the auditor must check for signs of insensibility BEFORE the second shot and record the stunning score. To pass the audit, 100% must be rendered insensible before hoisting or the beginning of dressing procedures.

**20. Question:** A plant claims to have a new type of electric stunner where an animal is rendered insensible because rhythmic breathing is absent, but other signs of return to sensibility are present, such as vocalization and natural spontaneous blinking. Is the audit failed?

**Answer:** Yes. To pass the insensibility audit, all indicators of returning to sensibility must be absent. They include: rhythmic breathing, vocalization, natural spontaneous blinking like live animals in the lairage, menace reflex, and arched back righting reflex with the head bent back while hanging on the rail. The following signs are NOT signs of return to sensibility: nystagmus (rapidly vibrating eye) and gasping like a fish out of water. An eye with nystagmus movements moves much more quickly than natural blinking. Nystagmus and gasping are not scored as return to sensibility after electric stunning. After captive bolt stunning nystagmus and grasping must be absent. See chart on page 31 of the 2021 NAMI Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines & Audit Guide.

**21. Question:** If an auditor sees an animal returning to sensibility on the bleed table or after being hoisted on the rail, but is not performing the insensibility part of the audit, does the facility automatically fail the audit?

**Answer:** Yes. The 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide state “Any sensible animal on the bleed rail constitutes an automatic audit failure.” An animal observed returning to sensibility after being hoisted on the bleed rail is an audit failure.

**22. Question:** Some plants have a policy that if there is any doubt about sensibility after hoisted - they need to reshoot. For example, it is policy at one plant that if any pig is showing agonal gasping on the shackle, it is re-stunned with a captive bolt, even though that is not a sign of sensibility. Is this considered a sensible animal, if the second shot is applied after the animal is hoisted?

**Answer:** Some plants have specific policy on when to administer security stuns. Regardless of the plant’s policy on administering security stuns, when a second application of a stunner is used on an insensible animal or an animal that is showing signs of potentially returning to sensibility in any location during the slaughter process, it is considered a security stun and not scored as a sensible animal when assessing effective stunning or insensibility on the bleed rail or bleed table.

### Cattle

**23. Question:** A single beef steer vocalizes (moo or bellows) 8 times. Since 8% is over the 3% limit for cattle vocalizations, does the plant fail on vocalization?

**Answer:** No. On the five core criteria of stunning efficiency, insensibility, vocalization, slips and falls, and electric prod use, all scores are on a PER ANIMAL basis. The criteria are based on how many *animals* vocalized, not how many vocalizations were heard. If the same animal moos 8 times, it still is only counted as one vocalization.

**24. Question:** What is the definition of chronic mounting (also applies to sheep)?

**Answer:** If an animal is being repeatedly mounted by other animals in the pen to the point of exhibiting lameness or going down, the animal being mounted should be removed from the pen.

### Pigs

**25. Question:** A pig vocalizes (squeals) when the electric stunning wand (tong) is accidentally energized before it is fully pressed against the animal. Does this count as a point off the pig vocalization score?

**Answer:** No. This will count as a “hot wand” and will be a point off on the “hot wand” section of the electric stunning score. Hot wand scores over 1% fail on stunning. Hot wanding is a welfare issue because the sensible pig feels the shock.

**26. Question:** A pig squeals when it is halfway into the restrainer or stun box due to an electric prod. Does this count on the vocalization score?

**Answer:** No. The pig’s rear must be past the restrainer entrance to count. A score of over 5% of the pigs vocalizing in the restrainer fails on vocalization. The reason why pigs are only scored in the restrainer is due to difficulty of counting individual pigs squealing in other parts of the facility. Cattle are scored for vocalization in both the stunning area and the lead up chutes during handling.

**27. Question:** The CO2 machine malfunctions and several pigs wake up on the bleed table, get up and attempt to jump off. Is the audit failed if an employee shackles and hoists these pigs to keep them from running away?

**Answer:** Yes. This is an automatic audit failure. The 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide states: “Any sensible animal on the bleed rail constitutes an automatic audit failure.” It is obvious that these pigs were fully sensible.

**28. Question:** The employee stunning pigs with an electric stunner places the wand (tongs) on the middle of the pig’s neck and body on 10% of the pigs. Is the stunning audit failed?

**Answer:** Yes. Electric stunners must be placed so that the current goes through the brain. Stunning on the neck bypasses the brain and will not induce instantaneous insensibility. To pass the stunning audit the wand (tong) must be placed in the correct position on 99% of the animals. Refer to the guidelines for more detail.

### Religious Slaughter

**29. Question:** A plant that conducts religious slaughter shackles and hoists live animals BEFORE the throat is cut. Does this plant fail the audit?

**Answer:** Yes. The 2021 Guidelines and Audit Guide states: “Cattle, calves, sheep or other animals that are ritually slaughtered without prior stunning should be restrained in a comfortable upright position. For both humane and safety reasons, plants should install modern upright restraining equipment whenever possible. Shackling and hoisting, shackling and dragging, trip floor boxes, and leg clamping boxes should never be used.

## **Other Frequently Asked Questions/Clarifications**

**30. Question:** Should resting time prior to stunning be audited?

**Answer:** No, the concept of resting time is addressed in Chapter 3 of the Guidelines and Audit Guide, which does not outline Core Criteria for audits. Many animal handling and welfare concepts are discussed in the Guidelines, but only the Core Criteria and secondary criteria are to be audited.

**31. Question:** What is the definition of the term “annual” when referring to how often third-party audits should be conducted?

**Answer:** “Annual” when referring to audit frequency means every 12 months.