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# Export Meat Operational Guideline

## 1.2 Animal welfare incident reporting



### Purpose

This document outlines the reporting requirements for animal welfare incidents that are observed, or occur, at export-registered meat establishments, where a departmental officer is present.

### Scope

This document covers reporting of animal welfare incidents identified at establishments that process any of the following animals for the export of meat or meat products:

- cloven hoofed animals such as cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats, pigs, deer, and camels
- solipeds such as horses and donkeys
- wild game animals such as macropods (kangaroos and wallabies).

### Legislative basis

In Australia, animal welfare legislation including enforcement is a state/territory government jurisdictional responsibility. These laws cover all aspects of animal handling including during production, transportation, and slaughter within their jurisdiction.

The department has regulatory safeguards to ensure that animal welfare requirements are maintained in accordance with:

- the animal welfare regulatory requirements of the relevant state or territory authority (including reporting of animal welfare incidents as required by [state and territory legislation](#))
- Australia's legislated export requirements, and
- additional requirements of Australia's trading partners.

Under the *Export Control Act 2020* ('the Act') and its subordinate legislation:

- export-registered meat establishments are regulated by the Commonwealth government through the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department).

Under the Export Control (Meat and Meat Products) Rules 2021 and the Export Control (Wild Game Meat and Wild Game Meat Products) Rules 2021 (the Rules), export-registered meat establishments are bound to comply with their approved arrangement (including animal welfare standard operating procedures) which addresses their obligations under the Australian standard for the hygienic production and transportation of meat and meat products

for human consumption (Australian Standard AS4696) or the Australian standard for the hygienic production of wild game meat for human consumption (Australian Standard AS4464).

The compliance of establishments with their approved arrangement is enforced by the *Export Control Act 2020* and subordinate legislation.

The department has also developed a guideline which formally recognises the Animal Welfare Certification System (AAWCS) (a voluntary program developed and maintained by industry) that addresses:

- its documentation in the establishment’s approved arrangement
- the role of AUS-MEAT in administering and auditing this scheme
- reporting of incidents to the department and state/territory regulatory bodies
- the corresponding regulatory role of the department where AAWCS is in place.

See [Export Meat Operational Guideline 1.3 Department recognised animal welfare system \(AAWCS\)](#) for further information.

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## Principles

This document is to be read in conjunction with the [Export Meat Operational Policy 1.0 Animal Welfare](#).

All participants within the supply chain have a responsibility and duty of care for animal welfare while animals are in their care. This includes the owners of animals, transporters, and people operating in saleyards, spelling yards, and abattoirs and departmental regulators.

Animal welfare at export-registered meat establishments is the responsibility of the establishment management. Occupiers must proactively manage animal welfare within their own facility.

Livestock harvesting and livestock handling must be undertaken in a manner that minimises the risk of injury, pain and suffering and causes the least practicable disturbance to animals, as required under the AS4696 and AS4464.

Where animal welfare issues are identified, action must be taken to ensure that these issues are rectified immediately and effectively. The establishment has a responsibility to complete, and the department has responsibility to forward, all animal welfare incident reports to state/territory authorities.

Where establishment personnel have not identified and rectified animal welfare incidents, the On-Plant Veterinarian (OPV) will direct establishment management to promptly resolve the incident such that any injuries, pain or suffering of affected animals is alleviated.

## Incidents identified at abattoirs

### *Prior to slaughter*

An animal welfare incident identified at an export-registered abattoir includes:

- animals arriving to the establishment in an unacceptable condition; some examples include:
  - advanced cancer eye
  - complete blindness
  - fractured limbs
  - prolapsed uterus
  - severe mastitis
  - advanced actinomycosis
  - emaciation
  - transport stress (for example, transporting animals in excess of the maximum allowable time off feed, water, or rest where the animal can lie down according to the applicable species standards)
  - transport during late pregnancy or parturition
- structural components which may cause injury to animals; some examples include:
  - poorly constructed or maintained infrastructure causing injury
- animal cruelty by personnel on plant; some examples include:
  - using goads (such as electric prods) on eyes, muzzle, vulva, or anus of an animal
  - failure to provide for the welfare of animals whilst on-plant (food, water, and shelter as appropriate for the species, class, and scheduled time of slaughter of the animal).

### *During slaughter*

An animal welfare incident identified at an export-registered abattoir during slaughter includes:

- ineffective stunning (lack of unconsciousness / unconsciousness cannot be confirmed)
- delayed stun to stick interval
- use of electro-immobiliser before sticking (electro-immobilisation masks the ability to assess animal consciousness).

## Incidents identified at game processing establishments

An animal welfare incident at a wild game meat processing establishment includes evidence of a non-head shot wound in a macropod carcass.

## Animal welfare incidents

### Animal welfare incidents detected and actioned by the establishment

Establishment management has the responsibility to proactively manage animal welfare including to:

- ensure that an animal welfare incident reporting system is documented in the establishment's approved arrangement
- identify an animal welfare incident
- inform the departmental OPV of the animal welfare incident
- undertake timely corrective action to manage the incident
- raise an animal welfare incident report, and where relevant, collect and retain evidence
- provide the report to the OPV for review and professional statement.

The OPV has the responsibility to submit the report to the appropriate state/territory authority as instructed in the section: [Submission of animal welfare incident reports](#).

#### *AUS-MEAT audits*

An animal welfare incident report must also be raised by an establishment following a critical incident identified at AUS-MEAT audit (see [Export Meat Operational Guideline 1.3 Department recognised animal welfare system \(AAWCS\)](#) for further information).

### Animal welfare incidents not detected and/or actioned by the establishment

If the establishment has not detected and acted upon an animal welfare incident:

- the OPV must direct establishment management to take immediate corrective action to reduce further pain and suffering of the affected animal(s)
- the OPV must raise an animal welfare incident report with evidence and submit to the appropriate state/territory authority as instructed in section: [Submission of animal welfare incident reports](#)
- the OPV must discuss animal welfare concerns with the Establishment ATM prior to issuing a corrective action request (CAR)
- the establishment must record the actions taken.

Where identified by the establishment, these incidents must be reported to the OPV through the weekly meeting.

# Reporting of animal welfare incidents

## Completion of the incident report

An animal welfare incident report is generated by establishment management and/or the OPV using the appropriate report template to report animal welfare incidents detected at export-registered establishments. The purpose of the report is to provide information for the relevant state/territory authority within the jurisdiction to investigate the cause of the animal welfare incident<sup>1</sup>.

Adequate evidence must be collected to ensure that an animal welfare incident can be effectively investigated.

## Review of animal welfare incident report

Wherever possible, the OPV provides their professional statement and assistance to the establishment management in managing and filling out the animal welfare incident reports.

## Submission of animal welfare incident reports

For animal welfare incidents identified at **export-registered abattoirs**, the OPV submits the animal welfare incident report to the state/territory authority in which the animal welfare incident is raised and reported.

For macropod non-head shot incidents at **export-registered wild game establishments**, the OPV submits the report to the state/territory authority where the kangaroos were harvested and copies the report to the state/territory authority where the establishment is located.

The OPV must also:

- provide a copy of the report to the department's Food Safety Unit
- provide a copy of the report to establishment management
- provide a copy of the report to the Establishment ATM
- upload a copy of the report to the National Standard Filing System (NSFS).

## Departmental records

The department keeps a central database of animal welfare incident reports from all export-registered establishments.

## Review

This document is to be reviewed at a minimum every two years, commencing 12 months from the initial rollout date for the systems-based audit.

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<sup>1</sup>For animal welfare incidents identified in export-registered abattoirs, the relevant state/territory authority is not necessarily the state or territory in which the animal welfare case is submitted, but that which holds the jurisdiction for investigation and prosecution. Reports are referred to the relevant jurisdiction at the state/territory level after submission.

## Related material

The following related material is available on the department's website:

- Webpage: [Approved arrangement guidelines – Meat](#)
- Webpage: [Approved arrangement guidelines – Wild game meat](#)
- Webpage: [Export Meat Regulatory Action and Sanctions Policy](#)
- Webpage: [Guideline – Critical incident response](#)
- Webpage: [Quick Reference Card – Animal Welfare Regulatory Management](#)
- Webpage: Export Meat Operational Policy 1.0 Animal welfare (pending publication)
- Webpage: Export Meat Operational Guideline 1.1 Animal welfare – from arrival to completion of slaughter (pending publication)
- Webpage: Export Meat Operational Guideline 1.3 Department-recognised animal welfare system (pending publication)

The following related material is available on the internet:

- Webpage: [Export Control Act 2020](#)
- Webpage: [Export Control \(Meat and Meat Products\) Rules 2021](#)
- Webpage: [Export Control \(Wild Game Meat and Wild Game Meat Products\) Rules 2021](#)
- Webpage: [Industry Animal Welfare Standards – Third Edition](#)
- PDF: [Australian standard for the hygienic production and transportation of meat and meat products for human consumption \(AS4696\)](#)
- PDF: [Australian standard for the hygienic production of wild game meat for human consumption \(AS4464\)](#)
- Webpage: [The Australian Livestock Processing Industry Animal Welfare Certification System \(AAWCS\)](#)
- Webpage: [Land Transport](#)
- Webpage: [Is the animal fit to load?](#)
- PDF: [Is it fit for the intended journey?](#)
- Webpage: [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)
- Webpage: [APS Values and Code of Conduct in practice](#)

## Appendix 1: Roles and responsibilities

### On-Plant Veterinarian (OPV)

- Verify establishment compliance with the applicable animal welfare laws and standards as per the establishment's approved arrangement.
- Verify compliance of establishment personnel and operations on establishment with all aspects of the establishment's animal welfare standard operating procedures.
- Monitor the condition of animals arriving for slaughter and condition of meat game carcasses arriving for processing.
- Verify that the establishment management is appropriately managing animals arriving with unfit to load conditions.
- Ensure all staff are handling animals appropriately from the point of unloading through to, and including, the point of slaughter.
- Directing establishment management to take immediate corrective action, as necessary, to rectify animal welfare concerns and prevent further undue pain and suffering of animals on-plant (where the establishment has not identified animal welfare incidents and taken appropriate action).
- Verify that the establishment undertakes timely corrective action and is reporting animal welfare incidents to the relevant state/territory authority.
- Review the establishment's animal welfare incident report.
- Raise an animal welfare report when the establishment fails to do so.
- Submit the animal welfare incident report to the appropriate state/territory authority (see section: [Submission of animal welfare incident reports](#)) and provide a copy to the department's Food Safety Unit (FoodSafetyUnit@agriculture.gov.au), establishment management and the Establishment ATM.
- Ensure carcasses condemned due to gunshot wound are recorded in Meat Data Collection Systems (MEDC) as a condemned 'non-headshot'.

### The occupier

- Animal welfare at export-registered meat abattoirs is the responsibility of the abattoir management.
- Export-registered abattoirs are responsible for animal welfare from the unloading of animals off the truck at the abattoir to, and including, the point of slaughter.
- Ensure that an animal welfare incident reporting system is documented in the establishment's approved arrangement.
- Take timely corrective actions to reduce further pain and suffering of affected animal(s).
- Notify the On-Plant Veterinarian (OPV) of the animal welfare concern(s) as soon as possible.
- Collect all relevant information/evidence as required for animal welfare incident reports.
- Raise an animal welfare incident report together with the supporting evidence and provide to the OPV for submission to the appropriate state/territory authority.

### Field Operations Managers (FOM)

- A senior departmental veterinarian who has regional responsibility for export establishments and the supervision of Area Technical Managers within their region.

### Area Technical Manager (ATM)

- A senior departmental veterinarian who has responsibility for the technical support, assessment and verification of technical standards and operations in a defined group of export registered meat establishments.

#### *Establishment ATM*

- ATM with day-to-day on-plant responsibilities, on-plant staff technical review responsibilities and an establishment critical incident response audit (CIRA) audit role. Approves the establishment's approved arrangement and/or any amendments made to it.

#### *EMSAP ATM*

- ATM conducting the EMSAP audit at the establishment. This individual has not been the ATM with day-to-day on-plant responsibilities at the establishment being audited during the previous two years (i.e., held the Establishment ATM role). The scope of department animal welfare verification audits of AAWCS Certified establishments by the EMSAP ATM are limited to sighting evidence of:
  - a current AAWCS certificate; and
  - an acceptable audit outcome from the last AUS-MEAT verification audit.



## Appendix 2: Definitions

### Approved arrangement (AA)

An approved arrangement under Chapter 5 of the *Export Control Act 2020*.

An arrangement for a kind of export operations in relation to a kind of prescribed goods approved by the Secretary.

An approved arrangement:

- documents the controls and processes to be followed when undertaking export operations in relation to prescribed goods for export
- enables the secretary to have oversight of specific export operations.

### Corrective action request (CAR)

A written direction from the department to an establishment to correct non-compliance.

### Critical non-compliance

When used in relation to the audit of operations, means a failure (or a combination of the failures) to comply with any applicable requirement referred to in the Export Control (Meat and Meat Products) Rules 2021, 9-4(3).

### Critical incident response audit (CIRA)

An audit scheduled by the department's Assistant Secretary Meat Exports Branch, in response to an identified critical incident triggered by non-compliance of export legislation, Australian standards, and/or importing country requirements

### Non-compliance

Failure to comply with export legislation and/or importing country requirements.

### On-Plant Veterinarian (OPV)

A Commonwealth authorised officer (veterinarian) employed by the Department to conduct ante-mortem inspection and to provide daily supervision of post-mortem inspection and verification of the establishment's approved arrangement.

### Person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)

As defined in the *WHS Act 2011*. A PCBU has a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of workers while they are at work in the business or undertaking and others who may be affected by the carrying out of work, such as visitors.