

# Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

## Trader Notice MH 03/2020

### To: All Slaughter Plants

#### **Subject: Slaughter without pre-stunning – Implementing the derogation permitted in Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 Article 4 (4)**

This Trader Notice supersedes Trader Notice 20/2013 in relation to slaughter without stunning in ruminant and poultry slaughterhouses. It must be read in conjunction with other Trader Notices relating to the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter.

#### **Legislation:**

Article 4(4) of [Regulation \(EC\) No 1099/2009](#) states that, in the case of animals subject to particular methods of slaughter prescribed by religious rites, the requirements of paragraph 1<sup>1</sup> shall not apply, provided that the slaughter takes place in a slaughterhouse.

Slaughter without pre-stunning is to be used as an exception and only when required as prescribed by religious rites.

#### **Scope:**

This Trader Notice does **not** apply in cases where animals are stunned prior to being bled (even if destined for Halal or Kosher markets).

This Trader Notice does not address hygiene or health and safety aspects of slaughter without pre stunning.

#### **Approval Procedure for Food Business Operators carrying out slaughter without pre-stunning.**

All FBOs carrying out slaughter without pre-stunning must be approved by DAFM to do so.

1. Where an FBO intends to commence slaughter without pre stunning for the first time he/she must provide appropriate documentation and put in place the requirements below prior to commencing slaughter without pre-stunning.

#### **2. Application Process:**

- a) The FBO must complete an *Application to Commence Slaughter without pre-stunning Form* in [Appendix 1](#) indicating their intention to carry out slaughter without pre stunning. This form will be submitted to the VI-in-charge along with the associated documentation. Slaughter without pre-stunning may not commence until the *Application to Commence*

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 1 of Article 4 states that animals shall only be killed after stunning and that the loss of consciousness and sensibility shall be maintained until the death of the animal

*Slaughter without pre-stunning Form* has been returned to the FBO with a positive decision from DAFM.

- b) FBOs already slaughtering without pre-stunning may continue to do so pending compliance with this Trader Notice.
  - c) The FBO must draw up an SOP in compliance with the details of this Trader Notice and relevant Trader Notices.
  - d) The FBO must ensure the structural requirements in place are in compliance with this Trader Notice and must comply with Annex II of [Regulation \(EC\) No 1099/2009](#).
  - e) The FBO must provide letters from Customers **biannually** to the VI, which clearly state their requirement that they will only accept product from animals which have been slaughtered without pre-stunning.
  - f) The FBO must ensure relevant staff hold **Certificates of Competence** in slaughter without pre-stunning and related activities in accordance with [Trader Notice 41/2014](#)
  - g) The FBO must ensure that any staff verifying the welfare of slaughter without pre-stunning are:
    - i) Answerable to the AWO
    - ii) Have training equivalent to the AWO and
    - iii) Hold a Certificate of Competence as per [Trader Notice 45/2014](#) and [Trader Notice 16/2019](#).
3. The approval procedure for slaughter without pre-stunning may be amended by DAFM at any time. DAFM may also update the requirements for approval (structural and procedural) at any time.

### **Justification for Slaughter without Pre-stunning**

FBO must provide copies of letters from Customers biannually (twice per year) to the VI, which clearly state the customers' requirement that they will only accept product from animals which have been slaughtered without pre-stunning.

### **Role of the FBO**

The FBO must draft an SOP on slaughter without pre-stunning which must be approved by DAFM. Any changes to the SOP must be discussed with and approved by the OV. The SOP must incorporate at least the following:

- a) All operatives involved in slaughter without pre-stunning must have an appropriate Certificate of Competence.
- b) The correct procedure for restraint and slaughter must be described and include:
  - i) Restraint systems for cattle must be designed and operated in accordance with the "*Design and Operating Criteria for Bovine Restraining Systems for Non-Stun Slaughter*" in [Appendix 4](#).
  - ii) Sheep should be restrained in the most comfortable **upright position** possible, preferably using a conveyor "V" restrainer.
  - iii) The animal must not enter the restraint device until the operative is ready to slaughter the animal.
  - iv) In the case of bovines, the head must be mechanically restrained. However, the head should not be restrained until the operative responsible for neck cutting is ready.
  - v) Once restrained, the neck cut must be applied to the animal without delay.
  - vi) The neck cut must be carried out with a single swift cutting to the neck with a sharp knife high in the neck (under the jaw, to minimise ballooning of the carotids), achieving rapid bleed out through the severed blood vessels (both carotid arteries and both jugular veins must be cut).

- vii) The knife blade must be twice the width of the animal's neck and must be sanitized and, if necessary sharpened, after every cut.
- viii) In the case of bovines, slight relaxation of the head restraint (but not full release) will maximise effective bleed out.
- ix) The neck wound must not come in contact with restraining equipment while the animal is conscious which can be a source of pain and suffering<sup>2</sup>.
- x) The animal must not be released from restraint until deemed to be unconscious using all the following indicators (See [Appendix 2](#) and [Appendix 3](#)):
  - (1) Cessation of breathing
  - (2) Loss of muscle tone
  - (3) Permanent loss of posture
- xi) Consciousness is determined by the presence of any of the following:
  - (1) Rhythmic breathing
  - (2) Presence of Muscle tone
  - (3) Attempts to regain posture.
- xii) An intervention with simple stunning must occur:
  - (1) In the case of sheep, failure to reach unconsciousness in **20** seconds
  - (2) In the case of cattle, failure to reach unconsciousness in **90** seconds
 Time must be determined by a **visible digital timer** that is reset for each animal.
- xiii) No further dressing must take place until the animal is dead as determined by the following parameters:
  - (1) End of bleeding
  - (2) Relaxed body
  - (3) Dilated pupils
- xiv) The animal is considered to be still alive if it displays any of the following:
  - (1) Still bleeding
  - (2) Presence of muscle tone
  - (3) Pupils not dilated
- c) A stand-by method of stunning must always be present and immediately at hand and must only be used by an operative holding an appropriate Certificate of Competence.
- d) The monitoring and verification checks carried out must include:
  - i) That the operatives carrying out slaughter without pre-stunning are carrying out systematic checks to ensure that:
    - (1) the animals do not present any signs of consciousness or sensibility before being released from restraint and
    - (2) The animals do not present any sign of life before undergoing dressing or scalding.
  - ii) Daily monitoring of slaughter without stunning by the AWO or a competent person reporting to the Animal Welfare Officer
  - iii) The monitoring procedures referred to above must describe the way the checks have to be carried out and must include at least the following:
    - a) the name of the persons responsible for the monitoring procedure.
    - b) indicators designed to detect signs of unconsciousness and consciousness or sensibility in the animals; indicators designed to detect the absence of signs of life in the animals slaughtered in accordance with Article 4(4).
    - c) criteria for determining whether the results shown by the indicators referred to in point (b) are satisfactory.
    - d) the circumstances and/or the time when the monitoring must take place.

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of upright restraint, maintaining the animal in the upright position post-cut by means of a belly-plate will avoid occlusion of blood vessels and prevent the neck cut coming into contact with the restraint equipment.

- e) the number of animals in each sample to be checked during the monitoring.
- f) appropriate procedures to ensure that in the event that the criteria referred to in point (c) are not met; the stunning or killing operations are reviewed in order to identify the causes of any shortcomings and the necessary changes to be made to those operations
- iv) Verification of the effectiveness of the SOP to be carried out by the AWO at a predetermined frequency, taking into account any risks that might require more frequent monitoring.
- e) This verification must be carried out with sufficient frequency to ensure that the operatives are complying with relevant legislation and their SOP.
- f) If the slaughter without pre-stunning is considered unsatisfactory at any time by the verifier, the AWO or DAFM, immediate corrective action must be taken and recorded (e.g. intervention with stunning). Long term preventative action (e.g. structural review, SOP review, personnel review, etc.) must be taken

#### **Specific Requirements for Slaughter without pre-stunning of Ruminants:**

- a) Due care must be taken during the loading of the animal into the restraining system to minimize stress and injury. Every effort should be made to avoid use of any electric prods.
- b) If the animal's feet are lifted off the ground (e.g. sheep V-restrainer), prior to being unconscious it is important that the animal's body is fully supported
- c) The restraint equipment must hold the animal in a comfortable position
- d) When rotary pens are used, the head of the animal must be restrained before the start of the turning process. The turning operation should proceed smoothly and quickly without interruption to reduce as much as possible the period of animals being restrained in unnatural positions.
- e) For sheep, during neck cutting, the head may be stretched manually in addition to the mechanical restraining of the body. However, to maximize blood loss and minimize mechanical impact (scraping or touching) on the wound following the cut, until the animal is unconscious; it is recommended that the head continues to be supported during the early stages of bleeding.

#### **Specific Requirements for Slaughter without pre-stunning of Poultry**

- a) The restraining device or method must suit the type, size and species of the birds being slaughtered (e.g. the size and design of shackles and cones must be appropriate).
- b) The time of shackling poultry before neck cutting without stunning should be kept to a minimum (maximum one minute for broilers, two minutes for ducks, geese and turkeys). The use of blue lights and a breast comforter to calm the birds during shackling is highly recommended.

#### **Intervention in case of failure to reach unconsciousness**

In general, any method of simple stunning listed in Annex 1 of Regulation 1099 can be used in the case of failure to reach unconsciousness within the prescribed time. Article 26 (2) of Regulation 1099 allows Member States to permit the use of stunning methods that protect animal welfare during slaughter without stunning, that are not permitted in this Trader Notice (e.g. use of non-penetrative captive bolt in ruminants over 10kg)

## Appendix 1 - Application Form

<b>Application to Commence Slaughter without pre-stunning (Ver 02)</b> Using the derogation under Article 4(4) of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009	 An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
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**Part A:** to be completed by the FBO and given to the VI-in-Charge. A copy should be retained in the Vet Office.

Name and EU Number of Approved Establishment		
Species to which the derogation application applies:		
Type of Ritual Slaughter Applied for (tick)	<b>Halal</b>	<b>Shechita</b>

Documentation	Yes	No
Have you a satisfactory SOP on Slaughter without pre-stunning?		
Are the structural requirements in place to deal with proposed slaughter without pre-stunning?		
Can letters from Customers be provided clearly stating their requirement that they will not accept product from animals slaughtered with a pre-stun?		
Do operatives and verification staff hold appropriate Certificates of Competence for slaughter without pre-stunning?		

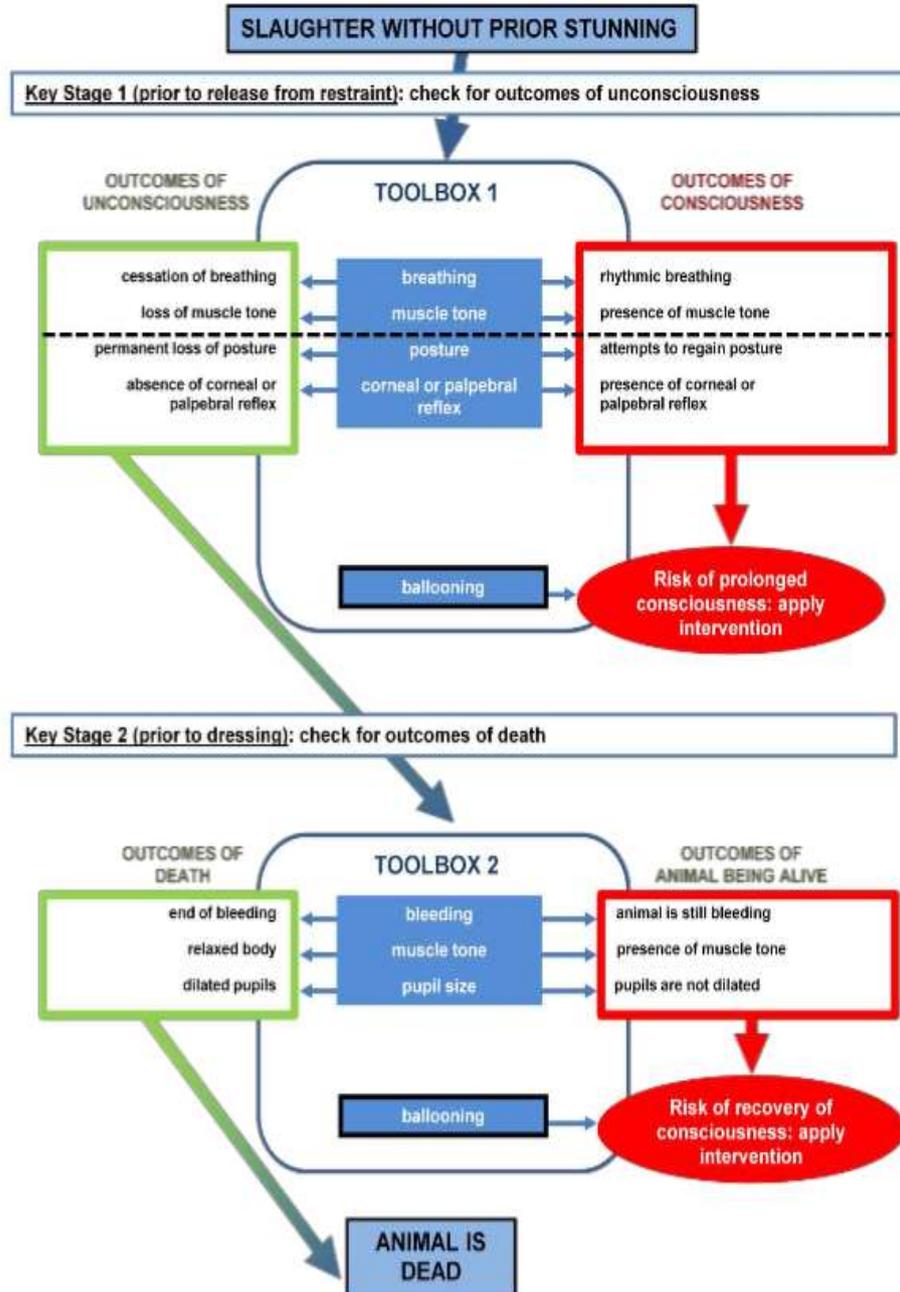
**Name of FBO:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of FBO:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of AWO:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of AWO:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Part B:** To be completed by VI in Charge and signed by VI and RSVI

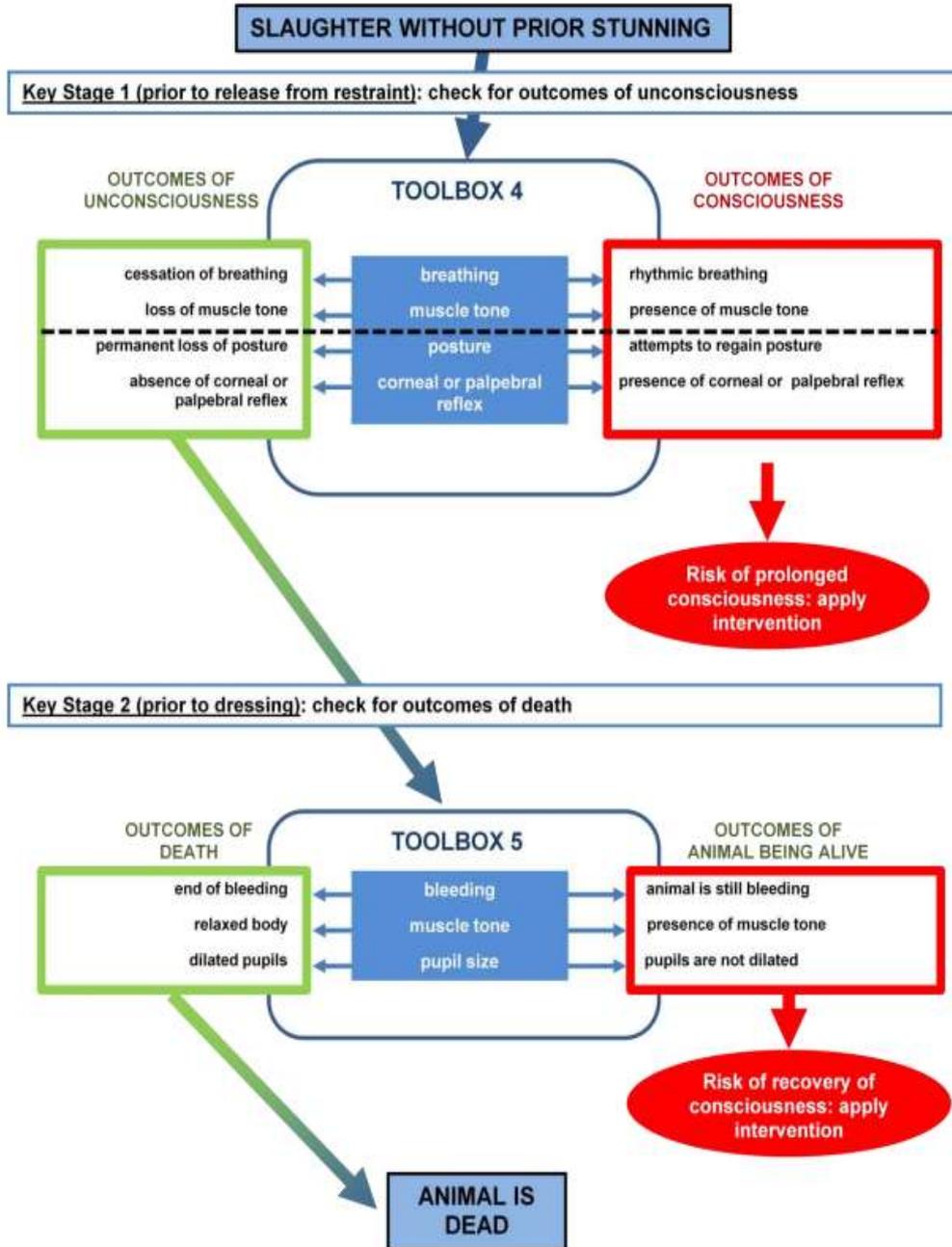
	Yes	No
Has all the Relevant Documentation been received?		
<b>Decision:</b> (Indicating whether the derogation has been approved or not) and reasons for refusal where appropriate	Approved	Not Approved
Reason:		

**Signature of OV:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of RSVI:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2 – Welfare Toolbox for Cattle



# Appendix 3 - Welfare Toolbox for Sheep



## Appendix 4

### Design and Operating Criteria for Bovine Restraining Systems for Non-Stun Slaughter

**Table 1 Overall box Design**

No	Feature	Condition	Parameter
1	Accommodation of the animal	Restraining systems must be constructed to permit a single animal of the appropriate size to be restrained without discomfort and to prevent any substantial movement of the animal forwards, backward or sideways once it has been placed in position for slaughter.	Appropriate height, length and width of restraining box; design/shape of tail pusher or tailgate (which should avoid sharp edges or surfaces or pressure points and should not permit the excessive pushing or crowding the animal once inside pen). Pushers should be set to a level of optimal pressure for each animal.
2	Slaughter man access	Restraining boxes should allow unrestricted access for the slaughter man to perform the cut and to visualise the success or otherwise of the neck cut.	Unrestricted access to the neck of the animal in restrained position with ventral cutting point presented unhindered.
3	Adaptability to different sizes of animal	Restraining boxes should be adjustable so that animals of different size can be made to feel reasonably comfortable and secure.	The restraining box should be designed so that the animal cannot turn around.
4	Position of Pen	The restraining box should be so located and positioned that the animal is not discouraged from entering.	The “horizon” of the box, as seen by the animal upon entering should not discourage entry and the box should appear as a continuation of the raceway.
5	Floor	The floor of the restraining box should not disrupt the handling of the animal and should be designed to facilitate the animal’s entry into the box.	Floor must be level and made of a non-slip surface. There should be minimal colour/surface shading difference between pen floor and race floor.
6	Box sides	There should be no points at which the animal can be subjected to localised pressure, cut or pinched when in the box prior to the neck cut.	Where a belly support is in use it must offer full support to the animal during collapse. There should be no gap between the support and the sides of the pen that might let part of the animal’s body slip through.
7	Tail pusher	Tail pusher should prevent avoidable pain, agitation, injuries or contusions.	The shape of the tail pusher should be appropriately designed not to cause localised pressure, discomfort or injury.

8	Control mechanisms	Accessible and easy-to-operate control mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The different parameters of the box should be adjustable and should be adjusted for each animal of different size and shape;</li> <li>Their operation should be smooth and allow the operator to “fine tune” distances for optimal adjustment;</li> </ul>
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**Table 2 Head Restraint**

No	Feature	Condition	Parameter
1	Neck stretching	Should not cause hyperextension of animal’s neck through excessive pressure causing retraction and ballooning of the carotids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Height of head restraint should be adjustable and designed to limit pressure;</li> <li>The head stopper, where present, should be smooth and designed so as to prevent points of pressure, avoid causing pain and allow slaughterman access; and</li> <li>Should be fully adjustable to different animal sizes.</li> </ul>
2	Head movement	Should prevent the animal from moving the head forwards, backwards and laterally.	Once the animals head has passed into the restraint, it should not be able to retract it.
3	Monitoring of unconsciousness	Allow the eyes, nostrils and mouth of the animal to be monitored for assessment of consciousness.	Unobstructed view of the animal’s head and eyes from the slaughterman’s position.
4	Neck position	Should allow the operator to ensure that the neck is in the correct position for cuts to effectively reach both carotid arteries.	The slaughterman should have easy access to the animal’s head prior to cut. The construction of the head restraint should not impede the action of the cut.
5	Bleeding	Should not inhibit post-cut bleed-out or cause post-cut contact of neck wound with restraint pen surfaces prior to release, which can be a source of pain and suffering.	Must restrain animal post-cut without allowing cut area to become occluded (i.e. by neck movement) or come in contact with restraint equipment.
6	Stun position access	Should not inhibit immediate post-cut stunning if neck cut is ineffective.	The overall design of the head restraint should allow the head of the animal to be positioned in such a way as to allow easy access for immediate post-cut stunning.

**Table 3 Belly Support**

**(Please Note: Use of a Belly Support is not mandatory, however where a Belly Support is in operation it must meet the following criteria)**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Parameter</b>
Access to pen	Belly support should not obstruct the animal's entry into the box or lead to difficulties in handling.	The belly support should be flush with the pen when not in use and must not have any protrusions, sharp edges, or pressure points.
Body support	Belly support should not be a source of unnecessary pressure, and thus unnecessary distress, discomfort or pain, on the animal.	The belly support should allow for an even distribution of the animal's weight without localised points of pressure which could lead to unnecessary distress, discomfort or pain.
Dimensions	Avoid suffering, agitation, injuries or contusions from belly plate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The support should be of sufficient size and width to support the weight of the animal post-cut without pinching;</li> <li>• The belly support should have no sharp edges or protrusions.</li> </ul>
Position	Where possible, the belly support should be adaptable to the height of the animal.	The height of the support should be adjustable to different animal heights.
Strength	Post-cut restraint.	The belly support must be strong enough to support the weight of the animal post-cut until insensible.
Bleeding position	The belly support should not inhibit post-cut bleeding.	The support should allow the animal to be held in the upright position with the head restrained.
Monitoring	The operator must be able to ensure that the belly support is in the correct position.	The belly support should be visible and accessible when the animal is in the pen.