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Animal welfare concerns in mobile cattle slaughter

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Main Swedish cattle slaughter plants

Percentage of animals slaughtered of totally 391,000 in 2017

Luleå 2.2
Delsbo 1.4
Rättvik 3.4
Krylbo 1.4
Örebro 2.9
Heby 1.2
Lövsta 1.2
Brålanda 3.5
Skövde 12.2
Dalsjöfors 8.2
Lammhult 2.6
Kalmar 13.6
Hörby 16.5
Linköping 17.4
Visby 4.5
Hälsingestintan 1.2

Swedish Board of Agriculture, 2018
Mobile slaughter plant

- Since 2015 a full-scale commercial mobile plant for large cattle, operated by a Swedish company
- Capacity for 30-35 animals per day
Animal welfare implications

- Sometimes inappropriate facilities and demanding working conditions – difficult to drive animals and handle hassle and balking properly
- Many welfare risks, e.g. stress, injuries and thirst due to incorrect handling
- Inadequate stunning is likely to cause considerable suffering
- Large variations between slaughter plants, stockpersons and animals – sometimes poor conditions
Human-animal interaction

Hassle and balking

High stress

Rough handling

Low stress

Adequate mild handling

Smooth animal flow

Slaughterhouse design
Workload
Education and training
Attitudes and normative values
Study objectives

- Evaluate animal welfare in mobile slaughter, comparing with large-scale conventional (stationary) slaughter
- Suggest improvements regarding slaughter routines and animal handling at studied plants
Recordings

- One mobile and one stationary slaughter plant
- 298 animals at each plant, during 1 year
- Animal handling and behaviour, time for driving-stunning-sticking, blood chemistry and carcass characteristics
Farm conditions at mobile plant

- Varying driveway arrangements, competences of stockpersons and animal types
- Animals driven by farm staff (67%), plant staff (8%) or both (25%)
- Noise from inside plant disturbed driving on outside
- Shifting weather conditions but no major effects
Transport and lairage at stationary plant

- Animals transported up to 250 km from farm to plant
- One third of animals kept in overnight lairage
- No consistent effects in any direction of transport distance or overnight lairage
- Conditions at transport and lairage not included in study
Handling and behaviour

- More animals re-shot at mobile plant, compared to stationary (10 vs. 3%)
- Longer stun-to-stick times at mobile plant, compared to stationary (mean 102 vs. 44 sec; 4-4.5 min in single animals at mobile plant)
- Other differences between plants inconclusive
- Shortcomings in mobile slaughter probably due to poor stun design
Conclusions

- Importance of calm animals when driving to stun box starts
- Importance of appropriate layout of premises, driveways and equipment, and correct handling at driving, stunning and sticking
- Differences between mobile and stationary slaughter mainly due to factors specific to the plants studied, rather than general differences between the two methods
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Thanks for your attention!

https://www.slu.se/mobilsakt/