

# TRAINING OF ANIMAL HANDLERS IN SLAUGHTER FACILITIES - A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

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# ANIMAL WELFARE

*“One of the most effective means of minimising pre-slaughter stress **is to** ensure that the **animal handling facilities** enable smooth and efficient movement of livestock and that the stockpersons **understand the principles of animal handling**”*

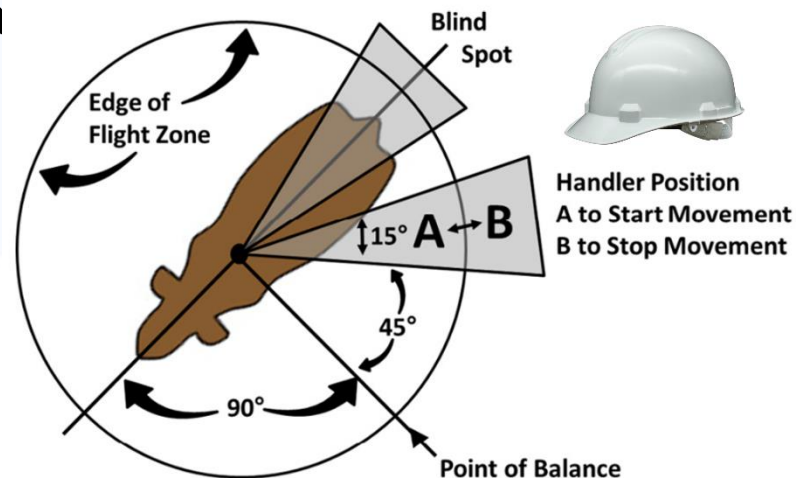
**Temple Grandin**



# THE PRINCIPLES OF ANIMAL HANDLING

- 🐮 Buy in from management
- 🐮 Teach animals handlers about:
  - 🐮 the **flight zone**,
  - 🐮 the **point of balance**,
  - 🐮 the use of **driving aids**,
  - 🐮 avoid **whistling and shouting**,
  - 🐮 what constitutes **animal abuse**,
  - 🐮 the **consequences** of wilful a of animal abuse

The 'easy' part



Adapted from Parish & Bourg Karisch, Beef Cattle Behavior and handling, Mississippi State University. Publication 2801 (POD-08-22)



# ANIMAL HANDLING FACILITIES

- ❏ No amount of training and buy-in from managements can make up for poorly designed facilities
- ❏ Which facilities:
  - ❏ Offloading
  - ❏ Lairages
  - ❏ Holding pens
  - ❏ Crushes and races

The 'difficult' part



# WELFARE INDICATORS

## 🐮 Arrival, unloading, handling and moving in lairage:

- 🐮 Slipping and falling
- 🐮 Turning back and reluctance to move
- 🐮 Lameness
- 🐮 Vocalization - increased fear, pain or distress
- 🐮 Fatigue and dead animals
- 🐮 Thermal comfort

## 🐮 In lairage pens

- 🐮 Access to water
- 🐮 Space allowance – animals can lie down comfortably

Identifying and documenting welfare issues. Documenting progress.



# WHY IS GOOD ANIMAL HANDLING IMPORTANT



**Bruise** (contusion) on the hindquarter of a cow



Severe stress in a pig: Lungs of a pig with **haemorrhages** and blood-tinged **pulmonary oedema**

Contrast this to the normal lung

Carcass may be congested ('fever')



Sheep carcass with severe **blood splashing**





**Pig with severe  
trampling fighting  
marks**



**Pig with splenic torsion**



**Pig – inappropriate use  
of tattooing equipment**





# OFFLOADING RAMPS AND OFFLOADING PRACTICES



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# WELL-DESIGNED FACILITIES



Notice the **small sliding gates**: avoid open spaces where animals may fall or jump through

Non-slip **metal floor grating** made from **heavy steel rods** to avoid slips and falls

Offloading ramp **level**



# ANIMAL HANDLER USING THE FACILITIES EFFECTIVELY



Positive messaging  
(5 domains): Animals  
must feel calm, safe  
and in control.



# FACILITIES NOT FIT FOR PURPOSES



# WELL-DESIGNED FACILITIES



Height adjustable offloading ramp

**Metal flaps** used to **close the gap** between the ramp and the truck

**Sliding gates** to close gaps on the sides





**Wide gap:  
Animals may  
fall off**



Training is not going to help much to resolve these problems





Offloading of pigs  
using a **lift**

Avoid any angle for  
pigs



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# LAIRAGES, HOLDING PENS, HERDING ANIMALS



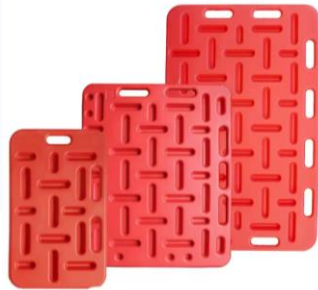
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# DRIVING AIDS

- 🐮 Plastic rattle/sorting paddle
- 🐮 Flags
- 🐮 Old feed bags – ensure that the bottom of the bag is cut open!!
- 🐮 Big plastic bags filled with air and tied to a stick
- 🐮 Old plastic aprons cut into ribbons and tied to a small stick
- 🐮 Sorting boards for pigs
- 🐮 Pool noodles

Can be used sparingly with good design and/or moving small numbers of animals



# FACILITIES **NOT** FIT FOR PURPOSES



Training is not going to result in a big improvement in handling

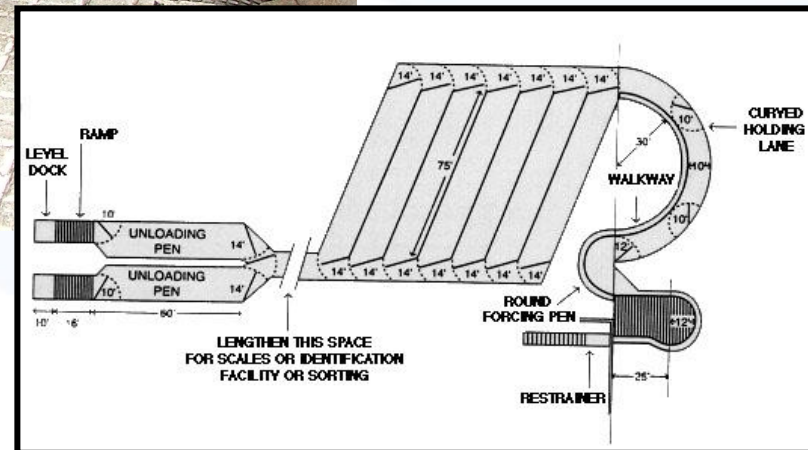


# WELL-DESIGNED FACILITIES



Herring-bone design – no driving aid

Also, non-slip grooved concrete flooring



Understanding Flight Zone and Point of Balance for Low Stress Handling of Cattle, Sheep, and Pigs by Temple Grandin



Training will result  
in a big  
improvement in  
handling



**No driving aids** but group size is  
much too big

**Drive smaller groups** – 6- 10 pigs

Consider using a **lightweight  
wooden pig sorting board**





Pig holding pens must have **solid walls** for preference

Enrichment of the environment





Lairages for pigs must be equipped with **cold water sprayers**

**NB!!! Heat stress** – lung oedema; haemorrhages throughout the lungs; blood in draining lymph nodes





**Solid walls = Calm pigs**

**Animals handlers and neighboring pigs should not disturb resting pigs.**

**Positive messaging  
(5 domains):  
Animals must  
experience physical  
and thermal  
comfort.**







Some of the holding pens have **limited protections against the sun** - animal handlers know not to put the pigs in direct sunlight but....



# CRUSHES AND RACES LEADING INTO THE ABATTOIR



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# WELL-DESIGNED FACILITIES



The crush connecting the **lairage** to the **restraining area** in this abattoir has **solid sides** and is high enough – no distractions!



# FACILITIES **NOT** FIT FOR PURPOSES



**Open sides** – can see personal moving

**Spraying cattle with water** just before entering stunning pen  
- Supposed to have a **calming effect** ?





Round crowding pen

Make sure the animal handlers **stands on the outside** and in the right spot

Do not pack cattle in **too tightly**





**Sliding trapdoor** that leads into the stunning pen

Animal handlers must open and close it between each animal so that **the stunning pen is not visible** from the crush or lairages





**Round crowding pen** with hinged gate - **pack sheep tightly** but not so tight that they don't have enough standing room.

**Crush at an incline** putting the stunning room higher than the dressing room



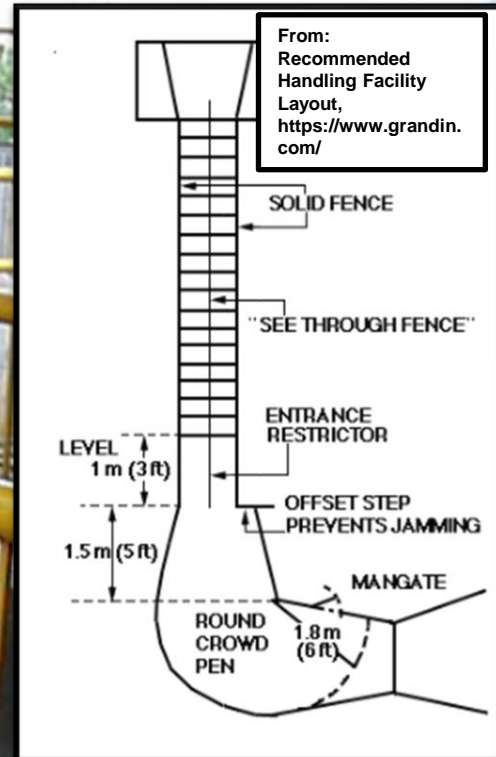


**Crush at an incline** putting the stunning room higher than the dressing room – no hoist required which allows for quick bleeding

Also, sliding a trapdoor that leads into the stunning area – **not left open all day** so that **the stunning pen is not visible** from the crush







**Race** leading to the crush – solid sides and wide passage

**Crush** into restraining device - Pig facing the wrong way. Ideally it should only be wide enough to allow one pig at a time to enter.

However, what about large pigs?



# EMERGENCY SLAUGHTER

- 🐮 **Do NOT move** injured cattle or pigs – kill on the spot, using appropriate methods
- 🐏 Sheep – carry to emergency slaughter entrance

Positive messaging (5 domains): Try to prevent injury, and if it does happen, have it dealt with quickly and as stress free as possible.



# Thank you



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