

SNAPSHOT

Pilot study on design of lairage, handling and stunning facilities and the potential impact on animal welfare and meat quality

Project Report Reference: 2016.1190

Date: 10 January 2019

Project Description

Project 2016.1190 was a pilot study to examine the potential impact of facility design at abattoirs on animal welfare and meat quality.

Project Content

While there is evidence that pre-slaughter stress, both acute and chronic, affect animal welfare and meat quality, little is known of the relative importance of handling pre-slaughter and the effect of design features of animal holding and raceways in Australian abattoirs on handling, stress and stun efficacy.

This project involved conducting a literature review of current knowledge on the effect of facility design on animal handling and pre-slaughter stress. In addition surveys were conducted of stock people on their knowledge and opinion of the effect of facility design on animal handling. Furthermore observations at 6 abattoirs in Victoria helped identify aspects of the design of the lairage and handling facilities which may create problems in animal handling and animal flow.

Project Outcome

This project resulted in recommendations on design of laneways, lairage areas, animal handling and dog use. While design problems of laneways and lairage areas may be mainly related to the age of the facilities, opportunities for stockpeople training were identified to improve stock handling and reduce pre-slaughter stress. Training of stock people may also result in a reduction of use of dogs for animal movement.

Benefit for Industry

The literature review and preliminary data collected for this project can inform an evaluation of the importance of facility design and the development of design principles to facilitate flow of movement and ease of handling, reduce stress and thus limitations of stress on animal welfare and meat quality

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