

Work instruction – Loading and unloading pigs

Loading and unloading can be the most stressful part of the journey for pigs. Handling and moving animals appropriately will make the process easier, minimise stress levels for pigs and stockman and reduce the risk of injury.

Equipment required

- Suitable loading bay
- Secure raceway leading to loading bay
- Pig boards

Personal safety

- Pigs can be unpredictable. Only competent staff should move pigs

Initial checks for loading and unloading

- Clear the loading bay and raceway of any obstructions and distractions, ie hoses, brushes etc
- Ensure the raceway leading to/from the loading bay provides a clear and obvious path for the pigs to follow and does not include any right-angled bends
- Check that the loading bay being used is suitable for the vehicle, ie the height of the loading bay and lorry are similar so the ramp is level when dropped

The external ramp should never be more than 25° and internal ramps should never be more than 33°.

- Secure the loading bay, gates and raceway so that the pigs can not escape
- The sides of the raceway should be solid to prevent encourage the pigs forward and minimise distractions
- Ensure that the floor is clean and, as far as possible, non-slip – use sand if surface is slippery
- Check how many pigs are being loaded/unloaded, is there enough holding space available for them when they arrive or on the lorry
- Ensure all paperwork is prepared and completed appropriately
- Ensure that all the pigs are fit for transport. Arrange separate pen in case any casualty pigs arrive

Outline of the work – loading

- Check what size the groups need to be for each pen on the lorry
- Use internal lights on the lorry to make the area uniformly brighter
- On bright sunny days, close the ventilation flaps during loading to avoid bright and dark spots inside the lorry
- Move the pigs in small groups, i.e. enough to fill one pen on the transport vehicle
- The mixing of pigs from different groups should be avoided wherever possible
- Walk the pigs at their own pace, using pig boards to prevent them from turning back

Pigs have poor eye sight and will use their sense of smell when moving.

They should always be allowed to move at their own pace to avoid causing stress.

- Make use of the pigs' natural behaviour to follow other pigs. This will keep you and the pigs calm and prevent the pigs from rushing or getting stuck which could lead to injury
- Never try pushing a pig forward if the way ahead is not clear or other animals have stopped in front of it.
- Hitting and kicking pigs is not acceptable and may result in downgrading at the processing plant
- Clean and disinfect the loading bay and raceway after use to maintain biosecurity

Rushing large groups of pigs onto a lorry will not save time and will cause stress to the animals which will affect their welfare and meat quality.

Certain handling aids eg electric goads are banned by assurance schemes. It is also illegal to use these on animals under six months old.

Inappropriate handling of pigs is unacceptable and will result in disciplinary action





- Good non slip flooring
- Solid sides to prevent distraction
- Keep people behind animals at all times



- Use a pig board to direct animals
- Allow the animals to move at their own pace



- Ensure the ramp is as level as possible
- Ensure area is secure
- Ensure way forward for pigs is clear and obvious with no obstructions

Outline of the work – unloading

- Ensure that the unloading bay is secure and provides a clear way forward for the animals
- Ensure everybody knows where the animals are going and open/close gates accordingly
- Keep the slope of the ramp/tailboard to a minimum
- Allow the pigs to move at their own pace – rushing them will lead to injury
- Unless they are behind the pigs, keep all people out of the way
- Monitor the animals and check for any injury or sign of illness that requires attention
- Secure the pigs in their pens Mixing of pigs from different groups should be avoided wherever possible
- Complete all relevant paperwork
- Clean and disinfect the loading bay and raceway once the lorry has left to maintain biosecurity

Legal requirements

The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 has specific requirements for transport including:

- No person shall transport animals or cause animals to be transported in a way that is likely to cause injury or undue suffering to them
- The vehicle and loading and unloading facilities are designed, constructed and maintained to avoid injury and suffering
- An animal transport certificate is required for all journeys above 50km

Further information

The Welfare of Animals (Transport) 2006, Defra, (England) www.defra.gov.uk

For more help or advice please contact your regional KE manager.

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