



Ministry of  
Agriculture

## **Guidelines for Veterinary Practitioners**

### **Emergency Slaughter under the B.C. Meat Inspection Regulation**

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## Introduction

The B.C. Government's new meat inspection program reinforces the province's reputation for safe and wholesome meat by continuing the current safeguards and inspection system in provincially licensed Class A and B slaughter establishments.

Animal health and welfare standards of the highest quality are essential elements in an inspection program that provides assurance that safe food is produced for the consumer. In exceptional circumstances where transportation of a live healthy animal will cause undue suffering or pose a significant risk of injury to the animal or humans if transported, it may be necessary to have the animal slaughtered under the supervision of a veterinary practitioner, bled and transported to a provincially licensed slaughter establishment.

The method of transportation must not present a food safety risk. There are three main concerns. First, the trailer must be clean so that further contamination of the bled animal does not occur. Secondly, care must be taken that any bodily fluids exiting from the bled animal are contained. This includes brain tissue and blood which may seep out of a stun wound in the head.

A bled carcass which is covered in manure is a serious food safety risk due to the high degree of contamination which will be introduced into the slaughterhouse environment. If, in the opinion of the meat hygiene inspector, a bled animal arrives which presents a food safety risk in this regard, the bled animal may be condemned for contamination.

Third, the transportation time of the bled animal to the slaughter establishment, must be carefully managed. The maximum time for delivery of the bled animal from the time of stunning is two hours. Shorter delivery times may be specified depending on the method of transportation (no refrigeration), and weather conditions. Shipment during warm weather may necessitate shipping times as short as 30-45 minutes.

**An animal is not eligible for emergency slaughter if it exhibits clinical signs of any disease or condition that could be transmitted to humans in handling or eating meat. This includes animals showing clinical signs of systemic disease and/or emaciation.**

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## **What is an Emergency?**

By definition, emergency means that there is or was an event which requires immediate action. Difficult situations will arise that require professional judgment and assessment. You may find the following guidelines useful in deciding whether or not an emergency situation is being presented to you:

- The animal which is being examined for emergency slaughter must be healthy and remain so until immediately prior to the event which caused the decision for an evaluation for emergency slaughter.
- Humane stunning must be carried out immediately following the veterinarian practitioner's evaluation for emergency slaughter. The animal must not undergo deterioration in health between the time of examination and the time of humane stunning.
- An animal suffering from a chronic condition is not eligible for emergency slaughter if the reason for slaughter by the producer/owner is only the chronic condition.
- If, in the opinion of the veterinary practitioner, the animal presents a significant risk of injury to itself or humans due to its size or fractious behavior, it is eligible for emergency slaughter if healthy.

## **How does a Veterinarian Practitioner perform an ante mortem inspection?**

A clinical examination performed by a veterinary practitioner resulting in a diagnosis is sufficient to allow a veterinary practitioner to determine whether an animal is eligible for post mortem inspection by a BC Meat Hygiene Inspector in a provincially licensed slaughter establishment.

An integral part of a clinical examination is a full history of the animal's health and the emergency event leading to the problem including previous treatment with veterinary drugs, anthelmintics (pour-on and injectable) and any other substances which are regulated by the federal Food and Drugs Legislation under the mandate of Health Canada.

## **Does the animal being clinically examined fulfill the food safety requirements that determine suitability for human consumption?**

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In simple language, is the animal being examined healthy and does it present any food safety risk? If that conclusion cannot be ascertained then the animal is not eligible for emergency slaughter. It is expected that the veterinary practitioner will perform a clinical examination to a standard that would normally be expected of any qualified practitioner in the same situation. This examination will be performed to a degree necessary to establish a diagnosis sufficient to answer the above question.

### **What is the difference between an ante mortem inspection and a clinical examination?**

An ante mortem inspection is a term which comes from the science of Meat Hygiene and is performed in a slaughterhouse setting. The task may be completed by a qualified inspector or a meat hygiene veterinarian. The objective is to determine pre-existing health issues and identify lesions and conditions which might provide relevant information for the inspector to use during the post mortem inspection. It involves examination of an animal at rest and in motion when possible, and it concludes with an assessment as to whether or not an animal is fit for slaughter for human consumption. In certain cases an animal may be condemned on ante mortem inspection.

A clinical examination is an assessment of health with the objective of determination of a diagnosis. One of the differences of an ante mortem inspection is that legally, only a licensed veterinarian can diagnose disease in an animal, as mandated by the legislation for veterinarians in the respective provincial jurisdiction. If, in the opinion of the veterinary practitioner, the diagnosis does not represent a food safety issue and the diagnosis is not in the list of exclusive conditions below, the practitioner has the option to approve the animal for slaughter for human consumption under the emergency slaughter program. If the animal is not approved then it will be disposed of according to local, provincial and federal regulations and accepted practices.

The following is a list of some of the diseases and conditions which **exclude** an animal from an emergency slaughter:

- Advanced pregnancy
- Acute or chronic septic conditions with systemic involvement.
- Blackleg
- Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
- Imminent death
- Moribund state

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- Digestive disturbances that have accompanying systemic signs
  - Extensive injuries which result in meat unfit for food
  - Extensive skin conditions which results in meat unfit for food
  - Emaciation
  - Depression
  - Fever, unless a specific localized condition can be identified which does not result in meat unfit for food
  - Listeriosis
  - Neurological signs
  - Mastitis with associated systemic illness
  - Chronic pneumonia and/or pleurisy with system illness
  - Tetanus
  - Salmonellosis

**Only healthy animals may be qualified for entry into a provincially licensed slaughter establishment eligible for post mortem inspection and possible entry into the human food chain.**

### **Specified Risk Materials (SRM)**

Obtaining a SRM transportation permit is the responsibility of the owner of the animal who will be transporting the carcass to the slaughter establishment. The SRM harvesting permit is the responsibility of the operator of the slaughter establishment that receives the carcass. Both permits can be obtained by calling the Canadian Food Inspection Agency at 1.800.788-8155 or the nearest District Office. The bled animal will not be accepted at the slaughter establishment unless the permit is procured and sent with the bled animal.

**The bled animal is considered as SRM in its entirety regardless of its age due to the fact that the distal ileum of all *Bos indicus* and *Bos taurus* carcasses is legally defined as SRM.**

### **Administrative Requirements for Emergency Slaughter**

The following is a list of administrative requirements which must be completed in order for an animal to be eligible for emergency slaughter in a provincially licensed establishment, as mandated by the B.C. Meat Inspection Regulation:

1. Acceptance of a bled animal must be pre-approved. Carcasses cannot be accepted without prior notification by a producer of their intent to ship the bled animal and approval of the plant operator.
2. The slaughter of an animal on-farm must be supervised by a licensed veterinary practitioner who is familiar with the species. All veterinary costs associated with the slaughter of the animal on-farm must be borne by the producer.

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3. The supervising veterinary practitioner must provide written documentation of the reasons and conditions of slaughter as per the form "Documentation for Approved Emergency On-Farm Slaughter (see attached)", including:

- confirmation that in the veterinary practitioner's opinion, the transport of the animal would be inhumane and/or constitute a significant safety hazard to people.
- an ante-mortem inspection(or clinical examination) confirming the health of the animal before slaughter;
- confirmation of the method of slaughter and that it was undertaken humanely;
- the date and time of slaughter, the time before and after bleeding, and time the intact bled animal (including head and viscera) was loaded and shipped from the farm;
- the estimated age of the animal (if beef) in order to identify as either UTM or OTM.

4. The plant operator and meat hygiene inspector must be notified immediately upon arrival of the bled animal at the slaughter establishment. Note: Bled animals will be eviscerated and post-mortem inspection undertaken immediately upon arrival at the abattoir.

5. Final disposition of the carcass will be based on the combined ante-mortem and organoleptic findings at post-mortem. The Meat Inspection Program Veterinarian may also be called upon to evaluate a suspect carcass.

Approved carcasses will be marked with the BC Inspection Legend stamp and are approved for sale in B.C. as an inspected meat product.

For more information please visit our website at:

<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/meatinspection/>

or contact us at: [bcmeatinspection@gov.bc.ca](mailto:bcmeatinspection@gov.bc.ca)