

# Slaughter Competency Self Evaluation Worksheet

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Slaughtering an animal well is both a skill and a responsibility. Food safety, the welfare of the animal, and meat quality can be severely compromised if a slaughter operator lacks the skills and experience to perform slaughter competently.

If you intend to apply for a Class D or E license, and plan to slaughter your own animals, it is critical that you demonstrate due diligence by assessing whether you are truly competent enough to slaughter an animal safely and humanely on your own. This self evaluation worksheet is a tool to help you make this vital assessment.

Being competent in slaughter is not the same as having experience, or having knowledge of the slaughter process without practical experience. True competence is a combination of experience, skill, and knowledge. Even very experienced people – i.e. those who have been slaughtering many animals, for many years – may be making serious mistakes if they never learned the correct way of doing things and their skills were never assessed by a truly competent person.

The SlaughterSafe course is designed for:

- Competent Class D or E applicants that plan to do their own slaughter, and
- Class D or E applicants that plan to hire a competent slaughter expert to perform slaughter under their licence.

If, after completing this assessment, you find that you lack the necessary skills, knowledge or experience to perform slaughter yourself, you should consider other options. For example, find a competent person to perform the slaughter for you. Or, seek training and/or find a mentor to improve your slaughter competence before registering for SlaughterSafe and applying for a Class D or E licence.

Be honest with yourself – remember that the safety and quality of any food product begins with you, the producer.

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## **You should ask yourself:**

- Have I been slaughtering animals for long enough to have developed confidence in what I am doing?
- Have I slaughtered enough animals to have developed confidence in what I am doing?
- Am I confident that the person(s) who taught me were truly competent and up to date on present day food safety expectations?

### **Before slaughter:**

- Am I aware how animal rearing and management practices can influence food safety?
- Am I able to tell the difference between a healthy and a sick animal?
- Can I tell when an animal is in distress?
- Can I recognize conditions that would make that animal unfit for human consumption?
- Do I understand how health and personal hygiene of slaughter operators can affect meat safety?
- Do I know what the difference is between cleaning and sanitizing?
- Do I understand why it is important to sanitize tools before and during the slaughter process?
- Do I know what methods I can use to sanitize?
- Do I know why it is important to keep knives sharp during the slaughter process?

### **During slaughter:**

- Do I know what signs to look for to confirm that the animal has been correctly stunned or killed?
- Do I understand the differences between various stun/kill methods and their pros and cons? Do I know how they differ between species?
- Do I know which ones are more or less acceptable, or unacceptable from an animal welfare point of view, and why?

### **Processing the carcass:**

- Am I confident that I can prevent contamination of the carcass from the hide during the skinning process?
- Do I know how to prevent contamination of the carcass during the evisceration process?
- Do I know how to identify the gall bladder, and why I want it to remain intact?
- Do I know what the pros and cons of washing a carcass are?
- Do I know when a carcass should be trimmed?
- Do I know what core (internal) temperature a carcass needs to reach within 12 hours after slaughter or before the carcass is bagged/wrapped for shipping?

### **Red Meat Questions:**

1. Do I know how to determine the age of a beef animal and why this is important?

2. Do I know what the proper temperature is for hog scalding water?
3. Do I know when to remove a hog from the scalding tank?
4. Do I know what SRM (Specified Risk Materials) are and how to handle them correctly?

**Poultry Questions:**

1. Do I know what the proper temperature for poultry scalding water is?
2. Do I know how long a chicken should remain in the scalding tank at the right temperature?

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The above questions cover some of the critical points in ensuring animal welfare, food safety and meat quality during slaughter. They should not be considered a complete list of everything that is important – there are many more things to know to do slaughter well.

If you were unsure about any of the questions, your skills may need brushing up. If you were unsure about a number of points, or if it feels like you have to learn everything all over again every slaughter season, you are almost certainly not ready to slaughter on your own.

If this is the case, please be responsible – hire a competent person to slaughter for you, or seek mentoring or training! And if you find you are completely comfortable with all this – see you at SlaughterSafe!