



World Organisation
for Animal Health



กรมปศุสัตว์
กระทรวงเกษตรและสหกรณ์
DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT

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FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

The importance of humane killing (WOAH Chapter 7.6)

What does doing it well look like and how does it help people and animals?

Regional Animal Welfare Training Conference
25 - 26 February 2026 Vang Vieng, Lao PDR



Presentation covers

- Introduction
- What we achieved and what next



Brief Introduction

- Humane killing of pigs — guidance anchored in WOAHA Chapter 7.6: purpose, scope, and core objective
- Core objective: ending an animal's life quickly, painlessly, and with the least possible fear or distress
- Applicability: on-farm depopulation, emergency disease response, small-scale and community slaughter, and field euthanasia
- Key components: validated methods, correct application, operator competency, monitoring and confirmation of death



Importance of the issue to the welfare of pigs

- Prevent unnecessary pain and distress: poorly applied methods can cause prolonged suffering, severe pain and fear responses
- Minimize physiological stress and secondary injury: struggling and prolonged handling increase cortisol, risk of fractures, bruising and shock
- Improve animal health outcomes and biosecurity: rapid humane killing reduces the chance of disease spread and contamination during disposal or processing





Importance of the issue to the welfare of pigs

- Protect meat quality and economic value: stress and delayed death degrade meat quality (pale, exudative meat, bruising), increasing losses
- Safeguard worker safety and mental health: safe, predictable methods reduce injuries to staff and lessen long-term psychological impacts of repeated exposure
- Preserve public trust and market access: compliance with WOA standards supports trade and consumer confidence





Evidence-based recommendations

1. Handling Before Killing

- Move pigs calmly, slowly, and in small groups.
- Apply flight zone and point-of-balance principles.
- Avoid shouting, hitting, or sudden movements.
- Ensure handlers are trained and understand pig behaviors.

2. Stunning

- Must cause immediate and sustained unconsciousness.
- Effective methods include:
 - Penetrating captive bolt or firearm (targeting the brainstem)
 - Electrical stunning (followed by a kill step)
 - CO₂ stunning (with proper equipment)
- Indicators of effective stunning:
 - Immediate collapse
 - No rhythmic breathing
 - No eye reflexes
 - No righting attempts

3. Killing Method

- Ensure the animal does not regain consciousness.
- Confirm death: no movement, no breathing, no heartbeat, no reflexes.

4. Facilities and Equipment

- Use solid-sided races, non-slip flooring, and consistent lighting.
- Maintain equipment properly and match it to the animal's size and age.



Overview of the completed trainings

- Trainings conducted on humane handling, stunning, and humane killing procedures.
- Participants included government officers, district veterinarians, farm workers, and disease control teams.
- Training topics covered:
 - Pig behavior and low-stress handling
 - Correct stunning techniques according to WOAH standards
 - Confirmation of death
 - Worker safety and biosecurity
- Outcomes: improved confidence, fewer handling errors, and more consistent stunning results.



Reflection on the trainings

What Worked Well	Challenges	What Could Be Improved
• High participant engagement • Practical demonstrations improved understanding • Equipment availability supported hands-on learning	• Participants had varying levels of experience • Limited equipment in some field locations • Emotional stress when working with large numbers of animals	• More one-on-one coaching • Development of illustrated training materials • Stronger follow-up and field evaluation



Plans on future trainings

- Develop a national standardized curriculum on humane killing.
- Conduct Training of Trainers (ToT) to expand capacity.
- Increase use of videos, simulations, and visual tools.
- Extend training to smallholder farms and remote areas.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of field practices.
- Promote welfare data collection to support policy improvement.



Summary

- Humane killing is essential for animal welfare and effective disease control.
- Good handling reduces fear, pain, and stress in pigs.
- Effective stunning ensures animals do not experience pain during the kill step.
- Proper practices improve worker safety, efficiency, and public trust.
- Continuous training helps raise national and regional welfare standards.



References

- WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code – Chapter 7.6: Killing of Animals for Disease Control Purposes
- FAO Guidelines on Humane Handling and Slaughter
- Five Freedoms and Five Domains animal welfare frameworks



Thank you



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