

Protection of animals at the time of killing

2008/0180(CNS) - 24/09/2009 - Final act

PURPOSE: to improve the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter or killing, to encourage innovation in relation to stunning and killing techniques and to provide a level playing field within the internal market for the operators concerned.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

CONTENT: the Council adopted a regulation improving the welfare of animals at slaughter by a qualified majority, with the Estonian, Netherlands and Romanian delegations abstaining.

The regulation aims at revising the legislation in force in the light of new technical and scientific elements. It also introduces a new approach - mirroring the one followed in the food safety field - increasing operators' responsibilities concerning welfare.

Subject matter and scope: this Regulation lays down rules for the killing of animals bred or kept for the production of food, wool, skin, fur or other products as well as the killing of animals for the purpose of depopulation and for related operations.

This Regulation shall not apply: (a) where animals are killed: (i) during scientific experiments carried out under the supervision of a competent authority (ii) during hunting or recreational fishing activities; (iii) during cultural or sporting events; (b) to poultry, rabbits and hares slaughtered outside of a slaughterhouse by their owner for his/her private domestic consumption.

General requirements for killing and related operations: animals shall be spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations. To this end, business operators shall, in particular, take the necessary measures to ensure that animals: (a) are provided with physical comfort and protection, in particular by being kept clean in adequate thermal conditions and prevented from falling or slipping; (b) are protected from injury; (c) are handled and housed taking into consideration their normal behaviour; (d) do not show signs of avoidable pain or fear or exhibit abnormal behaviour;

(e) do not suffer from prolonged withdrawal of feed or water; (f) are prevented from avoidable interaction with other animals that could harm their welfare.

The new regulation makes the following changes compared to the existing legislation:

- changing from a directive to a regulation: it provides for uniform and simultaneous application, avoiding administrative burdens and inequalities sometimes due to national transpositions and allowing faster implementation. It also establishes a single set of rules that will be clearer and easier to apply both for EU operators and trading partners;
- better integration of animal welfare concerns into the production process through the requirement of Standard Operating Procedures for operators and the appointment of Animal Welfare Officers in certain slaughterhouses to assist them in ensuring compliance with the rules laid down in the regulation;
- increasing the level of competence of the operators and officials concerned, proper training and issue of certificates of competence for personnel involved in killing and related operations;
- updating of a number of technical standards in view of scientific progress;
- regular monitoring of the efficiency of stunning techniques;

- animal welfare to be taken on board in the design, construction and equipment of slaughterhouses;
- promotion of innovation and a common approach in relation to stunning and killing techniques;
- improving protection of animals during mass killing operations;
- in the case of meat imported from third countries, an attestation accompanying the health certificate will be required, certifying that requirements at least equivalent to those laid down in chapters II and III of the regulation have been met.

Reporting: the Commission shall submit:

- no later than 8 December 2014, a report on the possibility of introducing certain requirements regarding the protection of fish at the time of killing taking into account animal welfare aspects as well as the socioeconomic and environmental impacts. This report shall, if appropriate, be accompanied by legislative proposals with a view to amending this Regulation, by including specific rules regarding the protection of fish at the time of killing;
- no later than 8 December 2012, a report on systems restraining bovine animals by inversion or any unnatural position. This report shall, if appropriate, be accompanied by legislative proposals with a view to amending the Regulation on this issue;
- no later than 8 December 2013, a report on the various stunning methods for poultry, and in particular multiple-bird waterbath stunners, taking into account animal welfare aspects, as well as the socioeconomic and environmental impacts.

Until 8 December 2019, provisions concerning the layout, construction and equipment of slaughterhouses shall apply only to new slaughterhouses or to any new layout, construction or equipment covered by the rules set out in Annex II which have not entered into operation before 1 January 2013.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 08.12.2009.

APPLICATION: FROM 01.01.2013.