

European Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter

THE MEMBER STATES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, signatory hereto,

CONSIDERING that it is desirable to ensure the protection of animals which are to be slaughtered;
CONSIDERING that slaughter methods which as far as possible spare animals suffering and pain should be uniformly applied in their countries;
CONSIDERING that fear, distress, suffering and pain inflicted on an animal during slaughter may affect the quality of the meat,

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

CHAPTER 1 General principles

Article 1

1. This Convention shall apply to the movement, lairaging, restraint, stunning and slaughter of domestic solipeds, ruminants, pigs, rabbits and poultry.

2. For the purpose of this Convention:

slaughterhouse: shall mean any premises under health control, intended for the professional slaughter of animals to produce meat for consumption or for any other reason;

moving animals: shall mean unloading or driving them from unloading platforms or from stalls or pens at slaughterhouses to the premises or place where they are to be slaughtered;

Lairaging: shall mean keeping animals in stalls, pens or covered areas at slaughterhouses in order to give them the necessary attention (water, fodder, rest) before they are slaughtered;

restraint: shall mean the application to an animal of any procedure in conformity with the provisions of this Convention designed to restrict its movements on order to facilitate stunning or slaughter,

stunning: shall mean any process in conformity with the provisions of this Convention, which when applied to an animal induces a state of insensibility which lasts until it is dead, thus sparing it in any event any avoidable suffering;

slaughter: shall mean causing the death of an animal after restraint, stunning and bleeding with the exceptions provided for the Chapter III of this Convention.

Article 2

1. Each Contracting Party shall take the necessary steps to ensure the implementation of the provisions of this Convention.

2. Nothing in this Convention shall, however, prevent Contracting Parties from adopting more stringent rules to protect animals.

3. Each Contracting Party shall ensure that the design, construction and facilities of slaughterhouses and their operation shall be such as to ensure that the appropriate conditions provided for in this Convention are complied with in order to spare animals any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering.

4. For slaughtering outside or inside slaughterhouses each Contracting Party ensure that the animals are spared any avoidable pain or suffering.

CHAPTER II

Delivery of animals to slaughterhouses and their lairaging until they are slaughtered

Article 3

1. Animals shall be unloaded as soon as possible. While waiting in the means of transport they shall be protected from extremes of weather and provided with adequate ventilation.
2. The personnel responsible for moving and lairaging such animals shall have the knowledge and skills required and shall comply with the requirements set out in this Convention.

Section I

The moving of animals within the precincts of slaughterhouses

Article 4

1. The animals shall be unloaded and moved with care.
2. Suitable equipment such as bridges, ramps, or gangways, shall be used for unloading animals. The equipment shall be constructed with flooring which will permit a proper foothold and, if necessary, shall be provided with lateral protection. Bridges, ramps and gangways shall have the minimum possible incline.
3. The animals shall not be frightened or excited. In any event care must be taken to ensure that animals are not overturned on bridges, ramps or gangways and that they cannot fall from them. In particular animals shall not be lifted by the head, feet or tail in a manner which will cause them pain or suffering.
4. When necessary, animals shall be led individually. Corridors along which they are moved must be so designed that they cannot injure themselves.

Article 5

1. When animals are moved their gregarious tendencies shall be exploited. Instruments shall be used solely to guide them and must only be used for short periods, in particular, they shall not be struck on, nor shall pressure be applied to, any particularly sensitive part of the body. Electric shocks may be used for bovine animals and pigs only, provided that the shocks last no more than two seconds, are adequately spaced out and the animals have room to move; such shocks shall be applied only to appropriate muscles.
2. Animals' tails shall not be crushed, twisted or broken and they shall not be grasped. Blows and kicks shall not be inflicted.
3. Cages, baskets or crates in which animals are transported shall be handled with care. They shall not be thrown to the ground or knocked over.
4. Animals delivered in cages, baskets or crates with flexible or perforated bottoms shall be unloaded with particular care in order to avoid injuring the animals' extremities. Where appropriate they shall be unloaded individually.

Article 6

1. Animals shall not be taken to the place of slaughter unless they can be slaughtered immediately.
2. Animals which are not slaughtered immediately on arrival shall be lairaged.

Section II Lairaging

Article 7

1. Animals shall be protected from unfavourable climatic conditions. Slaughterhouses shall be equipped with a sufficient number of stalls and pens for lairaging of the animals with protection from the effects of adverse weather.
2. The floor of areas where animals are unloaded, moved, kept waiting or temporarily based, shall not be slippery. It shall be such that it can be cleaned, disinfected and thoroughly drained of liquids.
3. Slaughterhouses shall have covered areas with feeding and drinking troughs and arrangements for tying up animals.
4. Animals which must spend the night at the slaughterhouse shall be so housed and, where appropriate, tied up in such a way that they may lie down.
5. Animals naturally hostile to each other on account of their species, sex, age or origin shall be separated from each other.
6. Animals which have been transported in cages, baskets or crates shall be slaughtered as soon as possible; otherwise they shall be watered and fed in accordance with the provisions of Article 8.
7. If animals have been subjected to high temperatures in humid weather, they shall be cooled.
8. Where climatic conditions make it necessary (e.g. high humidity, low temperatures), animals shall be placed in well-ventilated accommodation. During foddering the stalls shall be adequately lit.

Section III Care

Article 8

1. Unless they are conducted as soon as possible to the place of slaughter, animals shall be offered water on arrival in the slaughterhouse.
2. With the exception of animals to be slaughtered within 12 hours of their arrival, they shall subsequently be given moderate quantities of food and water at appropriate intervals.
3. Where animals are not tied up, feeding receptacles shall be provided which will permit the animals to feed undisturbed.

Article 9

1. The condition and state of health of the animals shall be inspected at least every morning and evening.
2. Sick, weak or injured animals shall be slaughtered immediately. If this is not possible, they shall be separated in order to be slaughtered as soon as possible.

Section IV Other provisions

Article 10

In respect of reindeer, each Contracting Party may authorize derogations from the provisions of Chapter II of this Convention.

Article 11

Each Contracting Party may prescribe that the provisions of Chapter II of this Convention shall be applied mutatis mutandis to moving and lairaging of animals outside slaughterhouses.

CHAPTER III Slaughtering

Article 12

Animals shall be restrained where necessary immediately before slaughtering and, with the exceptions set out in Article 17, shall be stunned by an appropriate method.

Article 13

In the case of the ritual slaughter of animals of the bovine species, they shall be restrained before slaughter by mechanical means designed to spare them all avoidable pain, suffering, agitation, injury or contusions.

Article 14

No means of restraint causing avoidable suffering shall be used; animals' hind legs not be tied nor shall they be suspended before stunning or, in the case of ritual slaughter, before the end of bleeding. Poultry and rabbits may however, be suspended for slaughtering provided that stunning takes place directly after suspension.

Article 15

Other slaughter operations than those mentioned in Article 1, paragraph 2 may commence only after the animal's death.

Article 16

1. The stunning methods authorized by each Contracting Party shall bring animals into a state of insensibility which lasts until they are slaughtered, thus sparing them in any event all avoidable suffering.

2. Use of the puntilla, hammer or pole-axe shall be prohibited.

3. In the case of solipeds, ruminants and pigs, only the following stunning methods shall be permitted:

mechanical means employing instruments which administer a blow or penetrate at the level of the brain,
- electro-narcosis,
- gas anaesthesia.

4. Each Contracting Party may authorize derogations from the provisions of paragraphs 2 and 3 of this Article in the case of slaughter of an animal at the place where it was reared by the producer for his personal consumption.

Article 17

1. Each Contracting Party may authorize derogations from the provisions concerning prior stunning in the following cases:

- slaughtering in accordance with religious rituals,
- emergency slaughtering when stunning is not possible,
- slaughtering of poultry and rabbits by authorized methods causing instantaneous death,
- killing of animals for the purposes of health control where special reasons make this necessary.

2. Each Contracting Party availing itself of the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article shall, however, ensure that at the time of such slaughter or killing the animals are spared any avoidable pain or suffering.

Article 18

1. Each Contracting Party shall make certain of the skill of persons who are professionally engaged in the restraint, stunning and slaughter of animals.

2. Each Contracting Party shall ensure that the instruments, apparatus or installations necessary for the restraint and stunning of animals comply with the requirements of the Convention.

Article 19

Each Contracting Party permitting slaughter in accordance with religious shall ensure, when it does not itself issue the necessary authorizations, that animal sacrificers are duly authorized by the religious bodies concerned.

CHAPTER IV

Final provisions

Article 20

1. This Convention shall be open to signature by the member States of the Council of Europe and by the European Economic Community. It shall be subject to ratification, acceptance or approval. Instruments of ratification, acceptance or approval shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe.

2. This Convention shall enter into force six months after the date of the deposit of the fourth instrument of ratification, acceptance or approval by a member State of the Council of Europe.

3. In respect of a signatory party ratifying, accepting or approving after the date referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article, the Convention shall come into force six months after the date of the deposit of its instrument of ratification, acceptance or approval.

Article 21

1. After the entry into force of this Convention, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe may, upon such terms and conditions as it deems appropriate, invite any non-member State to accede thereto.

2. Such accession shall be affected by depositing with the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe an instrument of accession which shall take effect six months after the date of its deposit.

Article 22

1. Any State may, at the time of signature or when depositing its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, specify the territory or territories to which this Convention shall apply.

2. Any State may, when depositing its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession or at any later date, by declaration addressed to the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, extend this Convention to any other territory or territories specified in the declaration and for whose international relations it is responsible or on whose behalf it is authorized to give undertakings.

3. Any declaration made in pursuance of the preceding paragraph may, in respect of any territory mentioned in such declaration, be withdrawn by means of a notification addressed to the Secretary-General. Such withdrawal shall take effect six months after the date of receipt by the Secretary-General of such notification.

Article 23

1. Any Contracting Party may, insofar as it is concerned, denounce this Convention by means of a notification addressed to the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe.

2. Such denunciation shall take effect six months after the date of receipt by the Secretary-General of such notification.

Article 24

The Secretary-General of the Council of Europe shall notify the member States of the Council and any Contracting Party not a member of the Council of:

(a) any signature;

(b) any deposit of an instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession;

(c) any date of entry into force of this Convention in accordance with Articles 20 and 21 thereof;

(d) any declaration received in pursuance of the provisions of Article 22, paragraph 2;

(e) any notification received in pursuance of the provisions of Article 22, paragraph 3;

(f) any notification received in pursuance of the provisions of Article 23 and the date on which denunciation takes effect.

In witness whereof the undersigned, being duly authorized thereto, have signed this Convention.

Done at Strasbourg, this 10th day of May 1979, in English and in French, both texts being equally authoritative, in a single copy which shall remain deposited in the archives of the Council of Europe. The Secretary-General of the Council of Europe shall transmit certified copies to each of the signatory and acceding Parties.

For the Government
of the Republic of Austria

For the Government
of the Kingdom of Belgium

A. VRANKEN

For the Government
of the Republic of Cyprus

For the Government
of the Kingdom of Denmark

For the Government
of the French Republic

P. BERNARD-REYMOND

For the Government
of the Federal Republic of Germany

Dr.H. HAMM-BRÜCHER

For the Government
of the Hellenic Republic

For the Government
or the Icelandic Republic

For the Government
of Ireland

For the Government
of the Italian Republic

For the Government
of the Principality of Liechtenstein

For the Government
of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

G. HEISBOURG

For the Government
of Malta

For the Government
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

For the Government
of the Kingdom of Norway

For the Government
of the Portuguese Republic

For the Government
of the Kingdom of Spain

For the Government
of the Kingdom of Sweden

For the Government
of the Swiss Confederation

Pierre AUBERT

For the Government
of the Turkish Republic

For the Government
of the United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland

D.S. CAPE

For the European
Economic Community

Certified a true copy of the sole original documents, in English and in French, deposited in the archives of
the Council of Europe.

Strasbourg, this 21st May 1979.

The Deputy Director of Legal Affairs
of the Council of Europe

Erik HARREMOES