

Stressed Hogs Transportation of Animals Program Compromised Animals Policy Excerpt

The information below is taken from part of the Guidance Document Repository (GDR) for the *Health of Animal Regulations*, administered by the CFIA which governs the humane transportation of animals in Canada. The complete document can be found at:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/humane-transport/compromised-animals-policy/eng/1360016317589/1360016435110#stress>

Stressed Hogs

The transportation of stressed hogs poses serious animal welfare concerns. As a result of various factors, such as weather, transportation, temperature, and rough handling, hogs can easily become stressed. Stressed hogs may exhibit any combination of the following symptoms:

- difficulty breathing or open-mouth breathing, panting, or gasping (dyspnea, tachypnea);
- blotchy skin (irregular skin blanching and erythema);
- high body temperature (hyperthermia) > 103 degrees Fahrenheit;
- refuse to move (with no other visible abnormalities);
- inability to rise;
- sudden death (with no other visible abnormalities, other than open-mouth breathing, dyspnea, tachypnea); and/or
- trembling

"refuse to move" can be described as the behaviour of a hog that does not keep up with its herd mates, that will not move when asked or moves very slowly and with great difficulty, and that is very stiff. These stressed hogs will often go down if prodded or forced to move.

Identifying a "Stressed Hog" That Is Unfit to Be Unloaded

A hog that exhibits all of the following signs is unfit (whether it is ambulatory or not) to be unloaded without first being humanely stunned or killed:

- trembling;
- patchy skin discolouration; and
- laboured breathing.

Subsection 138(2) of the *Health of Animals Regulations* prohibits the transportation and the loading and unloading of non-ambulatory animals. No person must load or cause to be loaded or transport or cause to be transported an animal that is non-ambulatory, except for the purposes of veterinary treatment or diagnosis. Unloading a non-ambulatory animal before it has been stunned, or causing such an animal to be unloaded, is unacceptable and is a contravention of the *Health of Animals Regulations*.

Subsection 139(2) of the *Health of Animals Regulations* prohibits the transportation and the loading and unloading of animals in a way that is likely to cause injury or undue suffering.

Unloading of stressed ambulatory hogs can result in a worsened condition and even death. Stressed hogs, either ambulatory or non-ambulatory, that are trembling, have patchy skin discolouration and have laboured breathing must not be unloaded in a conscious state.

The use of the hog sled to unload unstunned, non-ambulatory animals (including non-ambulatory stressed hogs) is prohibited. If a stressed ambulatory or non-ambulatory hog arrives at a slaughter plant or assembly yard, the animal must be protected from being trampled by other animals in the shipment. This may be achieved by halting the unloading process or by rerouting the other animals in the shipment.

A stressed hog (ambulatory or non-ambulatory) that is trembling and has patchy skin discolouration and laboured breathing is unlikely to recover. Options for dealing with such an animal include the following:

- Euthanize the animal immediately where it is found and hold for veterinary inspection prior to disposal of the carcass as inedible.
- If a CFIA veterinarian or inspector is immediately available and performs CFIA antemortem inspection and authorization for slaughter, stun the animal where it is found and have it moved immediately to be bled and hung for evisceration.

Some stressed hogs will recover if given sufficient time. Others will continue to deteriorate, eventually dying from cardiac arrest. If recovery of the hog is believed to be possible (the animal is not trembling, does not have patchy skin discolouration and does not have laboured breathing), provisions must be taken to ensure the animal is protected from other animals, and the waiting period cannot be so unreasonably long as to cause undue stress (in contravention of the *Health of Animals Regulations* and the *Meat Inspection Regulations, 1990*).

It is important to ensure that stressed hogs are handled humanely at all times.