

KILLING FOR DISEASE CONTROL

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Aims/Objectives:

Killing for disease control has had a prominent impact on farmed animal welfare over the past few years. This talk aims to provide an overview of the key elements relevant for humane and effective killing whilst meeting the disease control and biosecurity needs, latest advances and potential gaps.

Discussion / Conclusions:

The objective of killing for disease control is to rapidly remove infected animals and animals at a high risk of infection to prevent disease spread within the susceptible animal population. This generally involves the need to kill humanely very large numbers of animals in a very short time scale, especially for highly infectious diseases like FMD. Animal welfare is an integral part of killing for disease control and this is reflected in both the OIE *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 7.6. 'Killing for disease control' and the new European Regulation 1099/2009. The latter requires all EU Member States to report for depopulation operations the number and species killed, methods used, description of difficulties encountered and solutions to alleviate or minimise animal suffering as well as derogations from the routine welfare at killing requirements.

To achieve rapid and humane killing a contingency plan is required. This should cover not only practical elements such as the behaviour of the animals, equipment, methods or logistics but also engagement with stakeholders and training of involved personnel to ensure that those culling animals and supervising the cull have the right competencies.

For some species new methods of killing have been developed whilst for others efficient use of traditional methods remains key. Although considerable progress has been done in livestock and birds, there is still room for improvement in other species such as fish.

In summary welfare at killing should be an integral part of contingency plans for disease control in every country, ensuring that all infected animals and those at high risk of infection are culled in the most humane available way, taking into account timeliness, logistics and available resources.

Keywords: killing for disease control – OIE animal welfare standards – contingency plan – culling.