

**SHORT COMMUNICATION****Spot Assessment of the Slaughtering Procedure at Abattoir Market, Bodija, Ibadan**

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ABSTRACT

Slaughtering process of cattle, sheep and goats at the largest abattoir in Ibadan metropolis was studied in order to assess adherence to animal and human ethics. Study was carried out at Bodija in Ibadan using spot evaluation and oral interview. The sections assessed were skinning and singeing of cattle carcasses and small ruminants. Quality control as regards the movement and other human activities were not checked. All sections of the abattoir were overfilled by people with diverse wears other than uniforms. Finished carcasses, carcass-in-process and animals to be slaughtered were together in the same place. In other sections, a lot of cattle were singed with kerosene fire while animals yet to be slaughtered were by the side of the fire of the burning carcasses. Well over 50 goats were slaughtered on the same raised platform already filled with fresh and coagulated blood. The study showed that there were abuses of animal and human welfare during slaughtering process.

Keywords: Meat processing; kerosene singeing; abattoir; unwholesome beef; inhumane slaughtering

INTRODUCTION

Slaughtering is one of the processes of converting food animals into edible products and useful by-products. It therefore demands that, animals be necessarily slaughtered in a humane manner (Appleby and Hughes, 1997) and in an acceptable circumstances that are suitable to both the animal and human beings consuming the meat. The traditional methods of slaughtering cattle in Nigeria over the years need assessment for its conformity to human and animal ethics. Although there may not be choice as to the quality of the animal to slaughter, there is every right to accept or reject the type to be slaughtered. The fact that animals can suffer and experience pain as a result of wound or a cut in any part of their body should be a major welfare concern in meat production (Manteca, 1998). In order to conform to the welfare standard, it is desirable to render animals unconscious before they are slaughtered. To achieve this, animals must be stunned. Stunning is to ensure that such animal does not see death before the unavoidable death and does not suffer pain, discomfort and stress from slaughtering procedures. Apart from these, it is necessary for animals to be well rested and free from stress and injury associated with pre-slaughtering operations such as handling and transportation (Knowles, 1998).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The usual methods and process of animal slaughtering at Bodija in Ibadan, the current major abattoir of Oyo State, were studied. The center was purposively chosen due to the large number of animals (over 400 heads of cattle and 300 goats) slaughtered at this location daily. The abattoir had different sections for cattle, goats and pigs. Animals were received from the suppliers and inspected by the veterinarians under the Ministry of Agriculture, Oyo State. In the cattle section, more than 50 carcasses were simultaneously processed. Visual observations were used to assess the process while some questions were also asked for clarification from the officials and people in the place.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure I presents a cross section of activities during the processing of cattle. The picture showed the overcrowding nature of the place. The dressing code of the male and female handlers was sufficient to worry about. Different kinds of foot wears and clothes were observed with people where carcasses were cut opened and fragmented. The likelihood of disease transmission was high. The unsanitary human activity was capable of introducing germs and diseases into the meat, making it unwholesome.



Figure I. A section of cattle slaughtering unit



Figure II. A recumbent cattle



Figure III. Singeing with kerosene



Figure IV. Tied cattle in blood of other animals

Too much closeness to opened carcasses may expose the handler to the danger of contacting unexpected zoonotic diseases. Some recumbent animals meant for slaughtering are shown in Figure II. The cause and the nature of the condition were not known but the animals revealed a high degree of emaciation. They were actually sick animals and ought not to be presented for consumption.

Figure 3 indicates the traditional singeing process, such that some liters of kerosene were used to burn the skin of the carcass. Burning the skin might not be an issue to criticize but the unhealthy material used. The use of kerosene and any such materials have the potentials to alter the meat composition. It is reported that the consumption of even little amount of kerosene may result in cancer. Natural aroma, colour and taste of meat may as well be altered by the unguided and indiscriminate use of kerosene for processing cattle. Presented in Figures IV, V and VI are various situations where ruminants were subjected to painful and traumatic conditions at slaughtering. The question to ask is whether it is ethical to expose the animals to blood and fire over long hours before they are eventually slaughtered in the same place? Animals have the right to be free from hunger, discomfort, fear, pain, distress and freedom to express normal behaviour. In the religious framework, animals should be treated according to the word of God as it is written in religious texts or through the guidance of religious leaders (Rachels, 1993). Ethics essentially has to do with

carrying out the right thing and doing the acceptable thing for the animals, oblige change in attitudes and practices towards them. Ethics and animal welfare are not stumbling blocks for the production of livestock but to assist their proper management. It also showed that animals have sense organs and therefore feel pain and displeasure (Singer, 1990). Therefore, livestock producers and handlers have a duty to oppose inhumane treatment of farm animals at any stage of their life especially during handling, transport, housing, castration, dehorning, branding and slaughtering.

CONCLUSION

The study showed that the slaughtering process of goats, sheep and cattle at the abattoir seemed not to be effectively adhered to in all the activities, suggesting compromise of the quality and the standard practices.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest concerning the submission of this manuscript for publication.

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Figure V. Tied live cattle near a burning carcasses



Figure VI. Slaughter center of goats