

Guidelines for knife use during ritual slaughter in provincial abattoirs



Ritual slaughter must be conducted by a skilled person in a humane, sanitary and safe manner to prevent risks of food animal distress, food safety and knife handling hazards.

To prevent food safety hazards, the knife used for ritual slaughter needs to be cleaned and sanitized every time it is used. Any contamination on a carcass or its parts must be trimmed and not washed.

To prevent animal welfare risks, the knife used for ritual slaughter needs to be sharp. An adequate and proper neck cut is a critical step in rapidly achieving death of the food animal in an abattoir. When a knife is not sharp, there is a risk of animal suffering.

To prevent knife injuries, follow proper safe work practices and use personal protective equipment.

The following guidelines are advised for anyone using a knife (including performing a neck cut on food animals) in provincial abattoirs:

- wear a clean apron or coverall, hard hat and rubber boots before entering the kill floor
- wash hands with soap and warm water on entering the kill floor and before touching equipment or tools
- use a mesh glove on your free hand when sharpening or using a knife
- store the knife in a scabbard when not in use
- do not walk with an uncovered knife in your hand
- ensure there is adequate free space around when making a neck cut
- use a clean, rust-free knife that is at least twice the width of the animal's neck
- make a neck cut with a sharp knife only and sharpen it as often as needed
 - a sharp knife ensures the cut occurs in one smooth action
- clean and sanitize the knife in between the neck cuts and when contaminated
- clean the knife using water from the hose and sanitize it by dipping it in hot water sanitizer for two seconds
- always cut away from your body
- do not use a knife to pick up or position material
- if you drop your knife, do not try to catch it while it falls
- replace worn knives



Knife Scabbard



Knife Dipped in Sanitizer

For more information, email: [Food Safety and Inspection Branch](#).