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# Killing of 'surplus' piglets – ethical questions, possible methods

CLAUDIA MEIER, KAREN VON HOLLEBEN /

1 Training and consultancy institute for animal welfare at transport and slaughter,  
bsi Schwarzenbek, Schwarzenbek, Germany,  
info@bsi-schwarzenbek.de

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Farmers are allowed to kill piglets if indicated and performed correctly.

EU Regulation 1099/2009 defines “emergency killing” as “the killing of animals which are injured or have a disease associated with severe pain or suffering and where there is no other practical possibility to alleviate this pain or suffering”. The term “practical possibility” is difficult. Some measures of care would be practical if more staff was available. Is “lack of staff” an ethical correct reason to kill a piglet?

Pros and Cons of stunning/killing methods for piglets at farm will be discussed. The penetrative captive bolt with current apparatuses is dangerous in small piglets. According to German law it is only a stunning method. The non-penetrative captive bolt is not allowed for pigs in Germany, even for emergency killing and although it works as a one-stage killing method (WOODS, 2012). Electrical current as a one-step killing method is not possible for piglets smaller 4 kg because it is not possible to trigger heart fibrillation. For the CO<sub>2</sub>-chamber, questions remain whether the induction phase is consistent with adequate welfare. The blow on the head or manually applied blunt force trauma remains a cheap and practicable stunning (& killing) method but is disregarded for aesthetical reasons (AVMA, 2013). German legislation requires a second step for killing and farmers are reluctant to bleeding.

We have therefore started a project to explore the indications for killing and to test penetrative captive bolt as a one-stage killing method. Preliminary results will be presented at the ECAWBM 2016 Cascais Congress.

## References

1. AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2013 Edition, [www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/euthanasia-highres.pdf](http://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/euthanasia-highres.pdf)
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