



EU SUBGROUP ANIMAL WELFARE AT THE TIME OF KILLING

Stunning Methods For Poultry

30th May 2022

AGENDA

- 1. What is the problem ?**
- 2. How will the situation evolve without EU action ?**
- 3. Option : Prohibit water bath stunning for poultry after a certain transition period, in light of new scientific evidence to reduce animal suffering.**
 - 1. Impact of this option on the problem (point 1)**
 - 2. Impact on the stakeholders**
 - 3. How to refine the option ?**
- 4. Which alternative to water bath stunning ?**

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM ?

- Water bath stunning is the most common stunning method for poultry. Using a water bath to stun birds makes them unconscious before they are slaughtered or kills them instantly without pain.



EU COM Impact assessment & EFSA Opinion (2019) identified some areas of improvement linked to Animal Welfare as regards to Electrical water bath

HOW WILL THE SITUATION EVOLVE WITHOUT EU ACTION?

Water bath remains the most common used method for poultry stunning

Significant improvement of the technique along the years

- Reduction of the shackling time to 1 minute max
- Anti-stress actions (Re-design of the shackle lines, breast comfort plates, etc)
- Training of all operators and AW officer
- Additional checks and controls on the line, supervision of AW Officer
- Investment into new equipment (water bath stunner)
- Improvements made after implementation of EC Regulation 1099/2009

Continuous improvement | example 1

Working to reduce stress, facilitating stunning

- Good waiting conditions to keep the birds calm;
- Reducing the movements for unloading (no shocks, no tilting, ...);
- Quick and gentle manipulation for shackling;
- Adaptation of the lighting : blue light for example;
- Anti-stress system in contact with the breast of the birds;
- Adaptation of the waterbath to avoid electric pre-shock

Continuous improvement | example 2

Training of the operators

A lot of skills to acquire for the operators and AWO

- Knowing the regulation 1099/2009
- Physiology and anatomy of the animals
- Observation
- Basic knowledge of physics (to understand the waterbath system) : electricity, thermodynamics
- Basic knowledge of statistics

→ And a lot of responsibilities for the AWO !



OPTION: PROHIBIT WATER BATH STUNNING FOR POULTRY

1. Impact of this option on the problem (point 1)

- Animal welfare concerns will be transferred onto other techniques
- [Buhr, R.J. \(2009\) Why poultry should be stunned at slaughter and the welfare advantages and challenges of electrical and gas stunning. Euro-pean symposium on quality of poultry meat. Turku, Finland, Jun 21-24, Pl.18, 1-11.](#)

OPTION: PROHIBIT WATER BATH STUNNING FOR POULTRY

Overview of the main advantages and disadvantages of electric and gas anesthesia (Based on Buhr (2009)).

PROs	
Electrical bath stunning	CO2 stunning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rapid onset unconsciousness (<2 sec.)• Limited operating expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stunning in transport crates/conveyor belts• No handling before anesthesia

OPTION: PROHIBIT WATER BATH STUNNING FOR POULTRY

Overview of the main advantages and disadvantages of electric and gas anesthesia (Based on Buhr (2009)).

CONS	
Electrical bath stunning	CO2 stunning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hanging deafened chickens• Risk of electric shock before stunning• Risk of inadequate anaesthesia (immobilization instead of anaesthesia?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slower onset unconsciousness• Risk of exposure to inappropriate gas concentrations• Operating expenses for gas• Identification of chicks that have died on arrival is made more difficult• Ambiguity about loss of muscle control occurring before unconsciousness• More complex process, with higher risk of failure/breakdown



OPTION: PROHIBIT WATER BATH STUNNING FOR POULTRY

2. Impact on the stakeholders

- Heavy investments made by the FBOs to improve the quality of the stunning lines, the checks and controls.
- Closure of SMEs slaughterhouses (higher investment & operating costs of gas stunning, enormous physical space requirements for gas stunning equipment)
- Environmental impact (permits)
- Higher energy costs with alternative method

OPTION: PROHIBIT WATER BATH STUNNING FOR POULTRY

3. How to refine the option ?

- Extra study to evaluate economic & logistic impact (containers, layout of plant, extra plucker), safety and marketing impacts too.
- Further investment into R&D to improve current method
- Evaluation of the evolution of water bath stunning technique. Today's practice is different from 10 years ago.

Should a modern electrical water bath technique be banned?

WHICH ALTERNATIVE TO WATER BATH STUNNING?

- CO2 stunning
 - Not accessible for SMEs financially + infrastructure
 - Safety issue
 - CO2 Shortage risk (see UK 2018 & 2021)
 - More complex system requiring specific training
 - Potential trade ban from importing countries
 - Price increase of the final product
- Head only stunning
 - Technology not operational today
 - High price

CONCLUSION



Today, there is NOT any ideal stunning method



Continuous improvement
of the water bath stunning
method

e.g. research on
Monitoring of AW
indicators under video
surveillance (PoC ongoing
- FR)

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