



Maintaining water bath stunning, at least for some slaughterhouses

Under the ongoing revision of the European legislation on animal welfare, the European Federation of Foie Gras (Euro Foie Gras) calls **to maintain water bath stunning for fat palmipeds, at least for slaughterhouses whose slaughter frequency is less than 8,000 birds/hour**. Indeed, the 2019 EFSA¹ scientific opinion on the slaughter of poultry states that below 8,000 poultry/hour on a chain, operators have time to identify if fat palmipeds are not properly stunned and thus to apply the appropriate corrective measures.

First of all, the European foie gras sector emphasizes the attachment of its slaughterhouses to animal welfare. Getting quality products requires slaughtering properly fat palmipeds in full respect of their welfare.

Furthermore, the current water bath stunning system works well if the equipment used is correctly adjusted in terms of speed, etc. Veterinary services regularly check fat palmipeds slaughterhouses and each of them has an animal welfare officer who ensures that no animal is consciously bled. Over the last years, the use of a system for recording water bath stunning parameters has allowed to control the correct setting of the system as well as precise monitoring.

Finally, it has been proven that being diving animals in natural conditions, **fat palmipeds have a special anatomical capacity which, unlike other poultry, enables them to remain apneic for several minutes in the presence of high concentrations of CO₂**. However, these concentrations are necessary to cause loss of consciousness. Apneas of very variable duration and up to fifteen minutes have been reported. This great variability between animals means that before obtaining the unconsciousness of all fat palmipeds prior to bleeding, as required by the legislation, most of them are already dead. This has negative consequences on the quality of the products with, for example, problems of clogged veins. In addition, Euro Foie Gras recalls that currently, there is no effective alternative solution to CO₂, both technically and economically.

As it cannot cause the loss of consciousness of all the animals of the same batch within a certain period of time, gas stunning is therefore not suitable for fat palmipeds.

¹ EFSA scientific opinion on the slaughter of poultry of 26 September 2019: <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2019.5849>

Created in 2008, Euro Foie Gras, the European Federation of Foie Gras, brings together producers' federations from France, Belgium, Bulgaria, Spain and Hungary. Its goal is to establish a continuous exchange of good practices, know-how and promote the profession of foie gras producer.

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