PIG TRANSPORT

Code of practice for the transport of pigs in Western Australia

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PREFACE

The **Code of practice for the transport of pigs in Western Australia** is based on *The Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals - Land Transport of Pigs* and has been adapted for use in Western Australia. The original *Model Code* was prepared for the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management (SCARM) and endorsed by the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ) for use as a national code. It was prepared in consultation with the relevant industry organizations and state agencies.

This code has been prepared to assist all persons handling or using pigs in Western Australia, and reference to this code is made in Regulations provided under Section 25 of the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* for the purposes of a defence against cruelty. It is not intended to be used for either audit or compliance purposes.

This Western Australian version of the code is supported by the livestock industries and the Department of Agriculture. It is based on current knowledge and technology. It will be reviewed in the future on a needs basis, to take account of advances in the understanding of animal physiology and behaviour, technological changes in animal husbandry and their relationship to the welfare of animals.

For anyone using animals for scientific purposes, as defined in the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*, this code should be read and used in conjunction with the "scientific use code".

Further copies of this code are available from the Department of Local Government and Regional Development or from the internet at: http://www.dlgrd.wa.gov.au

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1 INTRODUCTION

This *Code of Practice* is intended as a guide for people who are involved in transporting pigs. It emphasises the responsibilities of the owner of the animals (or his/her agent), drivers, attendants and railway officials. It is intended to encourage considerate treatment of animals so that transport stress and injury are minimised at all stages of the transport operation. For this Code, transport includes the period immediately before loading including any waiting periods, loading, transit, rest periods and unloading at the point of destination.

Unnecessary transport of pigs should be avoided. However, any transport that is required must be carried out in a way that minimises stress, pain and suffering. The standards described in this Code of Practice should be considered as supplementary to those in the *Code of practice for pigs in Western Australia.*

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Pigs can be transported more effectively and with less stress if:

- care is given to the selection and preparation of pigs prior to transportation;
- care is taken in the loading of pigs using facilities well designed for pigs;
- well designed road and rail transport facilities are used;
- the trip is scheduled to minimise delays in travel or at the point of disembarkation of the pigs.

2 RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1

The possibility of pigs being injured or becoming ill is minimised by transporting them to their destination as speedily as possible, within the confines of any legal requirements.

2.2

The owner or manager is responsible for the pigs until they are loaded on to the transport vehicle when they become the responsibility of the driver. The driver is responsible for the density of the pigs at loading and for the pigs until they are unloaded at the destination. When pigs are delivered to an abattoir (including service abattoirs) the abattoir management assumes responsibility until slaughter. When unloaded at saleyards the pigs become the responsibility of the saleyard superintendent or agent. When unloaded at a second property they are the responsibility of the owner/manager.

2.3

Plans should be made to minimise any delay that could be stressful to pigs. The driver must ensure that he/she is provided with the name and telephone number of the owner/ agent of the pigs and of the person who will be responsible for the pigs at the final destination.

2.4

Persons organising the transport of animals must be aware of any requirements for health certification and welfare of the animals and ensure that approvals and documentation are completed before the planned journey. This is particularly important for interstate and export movements and will minimise delays that may adversely affect the well-being of the animals. Further information can be obtained from local offices of the Department of Agriculture or Primary Industry in each State.

2.5

Only fit and healthy animals should be selected for transport. It is the owner's responsibility to select pigs for transport. However, if the driver feels that the pigs presented will either not survive, or suffer unnecessarily during the journey, loading should be refused. Those most susceptible to disease, stress or injury should be loaded last and unloaded first. Separate accommodation for such animals is necessary.

2.6 Owner's responsibilities

2.6.1 The owner or agent has a responsibility to select, to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable to assess, fit and healthy pigs for travel and to organize the appropriate timing of transport relative to weather conditions. 2.6.2 The nature and duration of the proposed journey should be considered when determining the fitness required.

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2.6.3 The owner or agent is responsible for the provision of well maintained loading facilities.

2.7 Driver's responsibilities

2.7.1 The driver of a road vehicle is responsible for the care and welfare of animals during transport unless either an attendant appointed by the owner, or an agent is travelling with the consignment. Drivers must stop and assist a distressed or injured animal immediately they become aware of a problem.

2.7.2 Drivers should be trained to ensure the welfare of pigs in their charge and be familiar with the content of this *Code of Practic*e.

2.7.3 The driver should ensure that there is sufficient height between decks to prevent injury or abrasions to animals.

2.8 Responsibility for rail transportation

2.8.1 The welfare of animals is best safeguarded by a clear understanding and acceptance of responsibilities by the owner/agent and railway staff during the various phases of transportation.

2.8.2 Where drovers are used, they should be competent in handling pigs, be required to complete trip reports, and have authority to delay trains and attend pigs.

2.8.3 To minimise delays from train shunting, goods vans and freight wagons should be placed close to the front or back of the train and not between stock wagons.

2.8.4 The owner/agent is responsible for:

- careful selection, loading and unloading of animals;
- dealing with injured stock or other emergencies when notified by the railway authority;
- supplying stockfood at stock rest stops or in transit;
- providing a train drover to care for larger consignments of stock especially on journeys greater than 24 hours, or to share the care for several small consignments;
- providing contact names and phone numbers for owner, agent and person responsible at destination.

2.8.5 The railway authority is responsible for:

- providing well maintained wagons;
- ensuring train drivers are aware livestock has been loaded and of its location on the train;
- having livestock inspected during transport (if a drover is not present) and
- either correcting problems or advising the owner/agent of any necessary emergency action.

2.8.6 The owner of loading facilities including ramps is responsible for their maintenance.

2.8.7 Railway authorities should establish effective liaison with experts on animal husbandry and welfare and consult routinely on the design, construction and maintenance of existing or new rolling stock, stock assembly yards and other facilities.

3 MINIMISING STRESS

3.1

Stress is a cumulative response of an animal to its surroundings. Lengthy periods without feed and water, prolonged handling and transport, protracted fighting and extreme weather conditions may result in severe physiological effects. Pigs of different breeds may vary in their susceptibility to stress.

3.1.1 Pigs should be handled quietly and patiently in a way that maintains their condition for transport. If driven too hard they may become distressed and difficult to manage.

3.1.2 Stock handlers should be properly instructed and knowledgeable about animal welfare and be skilled in handling pigs under varying climatic conditions.

3.1.3 To avoid delay in loading pigs to be transported, pigs should be selected and identified before the transport vehicle arrives.

3.1.4 Extremes of weather will increase the stressful effects of transport, and transport during these periods should be avoided when possible.

3.1.5 To help reduce Porcine Stress Syndrome and to improve meat quality pigs should be rested in lairage at the abattoir prior to slaughter and given access to cool water. The minimum period of 2–4 hours rest should be provided after short journeys (i.e. of less than 4 hours). A more extended lairage may be required after longer journeys or during periods of hot weather. Pigs to be held in yards for 24 hours or longer must be provided with suitable feed.

3.1.6 Pigs showing signs of stress must be allowed to rest or they may die. The signs of stress include suddenly lying down, panting and trembling. The skin of these pigs may have a red splotchy appearance.

3.1.7 Special care is required for pigs transported for the first time.

4 PRE-TRANSPORT PREPARATION OF PIGS

4.1 Temperature

4.1.1 Hot weather and high humidity present major risks to pigs because they are unable to disperse body heat by sweating. Therefore, it is best to avoid transporting pigs in hot conditions. Wide temperature fluctuations between day and night are an additional cause of temperature stress.

4.1.2 The loading density should be reduced by at least 10% if the ambient temperature rises above 25°C.

4.1.3 Pigs can be cooled by use of water on the floor of pig pens or by spraying them with water. Only those pigs that have regained their normal temperature should be loaded.

4.2 Water and feed requirements

4.2.1 Sufficient cool drinking water must be provided in assembly and all holding pens to cater for the number to be handled. Adult pigs require not less than 5 litres/head/day and up to double this amount in hot weather. The water should be provided in troughs or drinkers which will allow all ages and classes of pigs to drink.

4.2.2 If pigs remain in yards for more than 24 hours before loading or if they are to travel for 24 hours or more, appropriate feed should be available with access to feed removed four hours prior to transport.

4.3 Shelter

4.3.1 Pigs are susceptible to extreme temperatures. In sunny or hot weather (30°C or more) shade must be provided. Sunburn can be a severe problem even in temperatures lower than 30°C and shade should be provided on days of bright sunshine. In cold weather pigs should be protected from wind and rain by nonabsorbent screens.

4.4 General exemptions

4.4.1 Providing they are fit to travel, on veterinary advice:

- pigs that are either ill or injured may be transported for veterinary
- treatment.
- animals may be transported to a place for emergency humane destruction,
- e.g. following injury.

4.5 Handling pigs rejected from transport

4.5.1 Animals that are clearly suffering must be promptly and humanely destroyed. Methods for humanely destroying pigs are provided later in this Code.

4.5.2 Humane and effective arrangements should be made by the owner or agent for the handling and care of any animal rejected as unsuitable for loading.

5 LOADING

5.1

Loading of pigs for transport presents special problems, particularly if they are not accustomed to being herded. Patience is essential. Proper design of yards and loading ramps will facilitate loading with minimum distress and bruising.

5.2 Supervision

5.2.1 The loading procedure should be planned well in advance to allow adequate time for pigs to be loaded quietly and with care to avoid injury.

5.2.2 Loading should be supervised by experienced stock handlers. Supervisors should ensure that spectators do not impede the smooth loading of pigs.

5.3 Cleanliness

5.3.1 Pigs should only be loaded onto vehicles or railway wagons that have been thoroughly cleaned before loading.

5.3.2 Appropriate construction methods should be used to minimise the soiling of animals on the lower deck of a double deck transport.

5.4 Facilities

5.4.1 The facilities for holding and loading should be properly maintained. They must be free from protruding nails, bolts, sharp corners, and anything else that would be likely to contribute to the injury or discomfort of the pigs.

5.4.2 Loading of pigs can be easier if pathways and ramps do not have sharp turns that impede movement and may lead to injury. Ideally the loading alleyway and ramp should be curved.

5.4.3 All divisions in the loading and forcing yard area should be built with solid panels to prevent the pigs from being distracted.

5.4.4 The slope of the loading ramp should not exceed 20°. The height of the loading ramp should be adjustable to deliver pigs to the upper decks of multi-deck vehicles. The internal vehicle ramp may be too steep for pigs to climb readily.

5.4.5 Ramps should be 900–1000 mm wide to hold two baconer-sized pigs side by side. They must be strong with solid sides of 1000 mm to prevent pigs escaping. Flooring should minimise slipping by providing cross cleats or steps. A flat area at the top of the ramp not less than 1 metre in length assists loading and unloading of animals.

5.4.6 During loading, the gate of a stock crate must be properly aligned with the loading race to ensure smooth movement of pigs and minimise injury. Solid filler boards or preferably flaps must be used to cover any gap between the loading ramp and the floor or sides of the stock crate.

5.4.7 Gates and doors should be sufficiently wide and retract fully to permit pigs to pass easily without bruising or injury. They should not be susceptible to jamming on opening due to impact by animals or due to transit shock and vibration. They should also be made clearly visible to animals when shut by providing a ‘sight board’ to improve visibility.

5.4.8 When loading rail trains, alignment between the loading race and the truck is easiest when a train guard and driver are in contact by 2-way radio. This will also reduce the amount of jolting associated with shunting.

5.5 Lighting

5.5.1 Pigs may baulk at shadows or patches of bright light and thus the intensity of lighting in transport vehicles should be even. Intensively reared pigs are often reluctant to move from a shed into strong sunlight so shade should be provided over the loading area.

5.5.2 Attention should be given to proper illumination of alleyways, receiving ramps, loading ramps and the entrance of the transport vehicle.

5.6 Segregation during transport

5.6.1 It is strongly suggested that pigs of different categories be penned separately when transported. This includes:

- sows with litters (preferably not transported unless essential);
- lactating sows (separated from their piglets);
- sows in the last third of pregnancy should not be routinely transported;
- young piglets;
- unfamiliar groups of pigs (where possible).

5.6.2 Adult boars should be penned individually. If detusked they may be penned with compatible sows or with baconers.

5.7 Assisting the loading of pigs

5.7.1 A canvas slapper or a pig board (flat 900 mm x 600 mm sheets with handles attached) are useful for moving pigs.

5.7.2 Electric goads powered by battery or dynamo only, should be long enough to reach baulking pigs at the front of the group. They should be used sparingly and only on pigs that are free to move. Goads must not be used on the pigs genital, anal or facial areas.

6 TRANSPORT DESIGN

6.1 Construction and design

6.1.1 Vehicles used to transport pigs must be constructed to protect the pigs from adverse weather or carry tarpaulins for use in adverse weather conditions.

6.1.2 Transport vehicles must be constructed from materials which allow the vehicles to be thoroughly cleaned.

6.1.3 Internal sheeting of the sides of stock crates should be smooth to eliminate pressure points and reduce bruising.

6.1.4 The floor should be constructed from a non-slip material that will not injure the legs or hooves. Where vehicle floors do not provide proper footing, pigs need straw, wood shavings, or other bedding material or sand for safe and secure footholds.

6.1.5 Vehicles should have appropriate and effective penning facilities. Pens should be no longer than 4 metres as longer pens will permit excessive piling up in emergency situations and can result in animals being suffocated.

6.1.6 Large aperture heavy mesh and other floor surfaces used for cattle transports are not suitable for pigs as these can cause bruising if pigs lie down.

6.1.7 The spacing of the side rails where they occur should be adequate to prevent animals' heads or legs from protruding between rails. The sides must be high enough to prevent animals escaping.

6.1.8 The space between the floor and roof or upper deck should be sufficient to allow pigs to stand in their natural position — about 1150 mm.

6.1.9 Rail wagons must be equipped with a roof or alternate means of providing shelter for pigs. It is also necessary for the inside walls of rail wagons to be constructed of wood or other good insulating material.

6.2 Ventilation

6.2.1 The exhaust system of a vehicle must not pollute the air inside the transport.

7 LOADING DENSITY DURING TRANSPORT

7.1

The transport driver or railway agent is responsible for ensuring that the loading density and penning arrangements are compatible with the welfare of the pigs and the capacity of the transport vehicle.

7.2

Loading pigs either too loosely or too tightly predisposes them to injury. Partitions should be used to reduce the likelihood of injury. In journeys of over 24 hours duration each pig should be given enough space to lie down comfortably.

7.3

The density of loading should be determined by the need to minimise injury but allow fallen animals to rise without assistance.

7.4 Table of Loading Densities

Assuming use of a 2.5-metre-wide stock crate with pen divisions, the recommended number of pigs which may be carried per pen is:
Pigs need about 10% more floor area in a truck when the ambient temperature in the stock crate exceeds 25°C.

Average liveweight (kg)	Pen Length				Space allowance (m^2/head)
	3 metre		4 metre		
	Min. No:	Max. No:	Min. No:	Max. No:	
50	30	33	40	44	0.22
75	21	25	31	34	0.29
100	19	21	25	28	0.35
125	15	19	21	23	0.42
150	13	15	18	20	0.48
175	12	13	16	18	0.55
200	11	12	14	16	0.61

8 TRAVEL

8.1 General

8.1.1 Where transport delays cannot be avoided, adequate attention to the animals, particularly regarding feeding, watering, ventilation and shelter, is required.

8.1.2 Pigs should be provided with adequate shade. Spraying pigs with water when temperatures exceed 25°C may help prevent heat stress. Transport of pigs during the early hours of the day or late afternoon or evening should be of benefit to decrease animal stress.

8.1.3 Drivers should drive trucks smoothly to prevent bruising and the risk of injury.

8.1.4 Veterinary, Police, RSPCA or Departmental Stock Inspector assistance should be sought as soon as possible to deal with severely distressed or injured animals. If necessary, injured or ill pigs should be humanely destroyed by the driver or drover without delay using the methods specified later.

8.2 Temperature

8.2.1 Transporting pigs in very hot or cold weather should be avoided wherever possible. Vehicle movement is required to provide adequate air flow or ventilation.

8.3 Feeding and watering

8.3.1 All animals should be fed at least once in each 24 hour period and preferably twice. Water must be provided every 24 hours, preferably every 12 hours. Young animals, especially piglets, require more frequent feeding and watering. Weather conditions will influence the need for feeding and watering.

8.3.2 Care should be taken to avoid prolonged deprivation of feed and water outside the above limits when a journey is broken by unloading and spelling such as at a saleyard en route to an abattoir. The total period of deprivation of feed and water from the time of initial loading until unloading after the second journey is the relevant period for determining feed and water requirements.

8.4 In-transit inspections

8.4.1 Regular inspection of pigs should be carried out by either the driver or attendant. The first within 30 minutes of commencing a journey and after that at regular intervals depending on the road conditions but no longer than once every 3 hours. A suitable source of lighting should be available to carry out inspections at night.

8.4.2 To enable in-transit inspection of stock, rail drovers should always accompany stock on journeys of greater than 12 hours duration.

8.4.3 Station Masters should report immediately to their Area Traffic Supervisor every instance where a train containing pigs is delayed. The Supervisor should be given special powers to minimise delays to stock trains and to give them priority.

9 REST PERIODS

9.1

Rest stops extend the total time of a journey and subject animals to unfamiliar surroundings. Unloading and loading pigs for rest stops may impose a greater stress than continuing the journey for a limited period.

9.2

If small numbers of breeding stock are being transported, a journey of up to 48 hours is permissible provided that:

- the stocking rate allows all animals to lie down comfortably;
- there is provision to water the stock on the vehicle.

9.3

When a journey will take more than 24 hours pigs, should be rested for 12–24 hours after 24 hours travel. They must be given comfortable accommodation with sufficient room in which to lie down. Sufficient feed and water for the duration of the journey should be provided within easy access of the pigs.

9.4

Transporters must have access to facilities where pigs may be fed, watered and cared for, and will provide shelter from the extremes of weather.

9.5

Pigs unloaded for food, water and rest must be placed in a suitably covered shelter.

9.6

Young piglets should be provided with special food as required, as well as water, at least every 12 hours.

10 UNLOADING

10.1

Similar requirements to those listed under ‘Loading’ apply to the unloading of pigs but note they will be tired after a journey and patience, good stock handling skills and good facilities will be needed.

10.2

Pigs should be unloaded as soon as possible after arrival at the destination.

10.3 Responsibilities

10.3.1 The drover or driver must bring to the attention of the person in charge at the destination any aspect of the journey that might affect the future welfare of the animals. This includes the last feeding and watering times and full details of any treatment given.

10.3.2 Persons in charge of the consignment must notify and transfer responsibility for the stock to a suitable person at their destination.

10.3.3 It is preferable that pigs are not left at their destination unless an authorized person is there to receive them. Where this is not possible, an authorized person at the destination must be given prior notification of the anticipated delivery time of the pigs and must ensure that adequate facilities are available to receive them. A reliable contact number should be clearly displayed so that the driver can report any difficulties or concerns.

10.4 Access to water and feed

10.4.1 All pigs must be given access to water when unloaded, including those consigned directly for slaughter. Troughs rather than drinkers allow more pigs access at one time. Pigs to be held in yards for 24 hours or longer must be provided with suitable feed.

10.5 Facilities at destination

10.5.1 It is advantageous to unload pigs onto level or upwards sloping surfaces, as pigs walk more readily uphill than downhill.

10.5.2 On reaching the destination, there should be facilities for the humane unloading or slaughter of animals that may be unable to walk off because of injury or exhaustion.

10.5.3 Injured pigs should be stunned and bled immediately, without moving them further than necessary to effect humane slaughter.

11 EMERGENCY EUTHANASIA OF PIGS

11.1

Previous sections of this Code have drawn attention to circumstances in which pigs may need to be humanely killed.

11.2

Where euthanasia is necessary, the person responsible for the animals must ensure it is carried out humanely and results in immediate death. Assistance should be sought from a veterinarian, the RSPCA or the Police or Departmental Inspector of Stock where necessary.

11.3

Euthanasia of animals is an unpleasant experience for most people. However, consideration for the welfare of the animal should come first and any spectators should be directed to move away immediately.

11.4

The animal should be handled quietly beforehand to ensure it is not unnecessarily distressed or alarmed.

11.5 Use of firearms

The most efficient, safe and widely available method of humanely killing pigs during transport is to shoot the animal through the brain at close range.

11.6 Safe use of firearms

A .22 calibre rifle or a .32 calibre humane killer pistol is adequate for humane euthanasia of most pigs. However, use of these calibre firearms must be followed by immediate pithing of the brain through the bullet hole or bleeding out.

- Any use of firearms is potentially hazardous;
- Persons other than the marksman and a handler for the animal should be cleared from the area or should stand well behind the marksman;
- Never fire while the animal is moving its head; wait patiently for a quiet interval before firing;
- To provide maximum impact and the least possibility of misdirection the gun should be fired at a range that is as short as circumstances permit, but not in contact with the animal's head.

11.7 Use of the captive-bolt pistol

11.7.1 When used with care this alternative is safer than a firearm.

- The operator does not have to be an experienced marksman as the instrument's muzzle is firmly pressed against the skull before firing.
- A captive bolt pistol only stuns the animal and it is necessary to bleed out the animal to ensure death.
- Blank cartridges for the captive-bolt pistol are colour-coded according to amount of charge they contain and the manufacturer's recommendations should be followed on the most appropriate blank cartridges for different farm animals.
- Regular maintenance of the captive-bolt pistol is essential for efficient stunning and avoidance of malfunctions. Maintenance of an appropriate and sharp knife is also required for bleeding out of stunned animals.

Temporal method:

(This is only suitable for firearms.) The pig is shot from the side of the head so that the bullet enters the skull at a point midway between the eye and the base of the ear on the same side of the head. The bullet should be directed horizontally into the skull. This method is preferred for adult pigs due to the heavier bone structure of the front of the skull.

Frontal method:

The captive-bolt pistol or firearm should be directed at a point about midway across the forehead in adult pigs about 2 cm above the level of the eyes as in Figure 1. When using a firearm, aim horizontally into the skull.

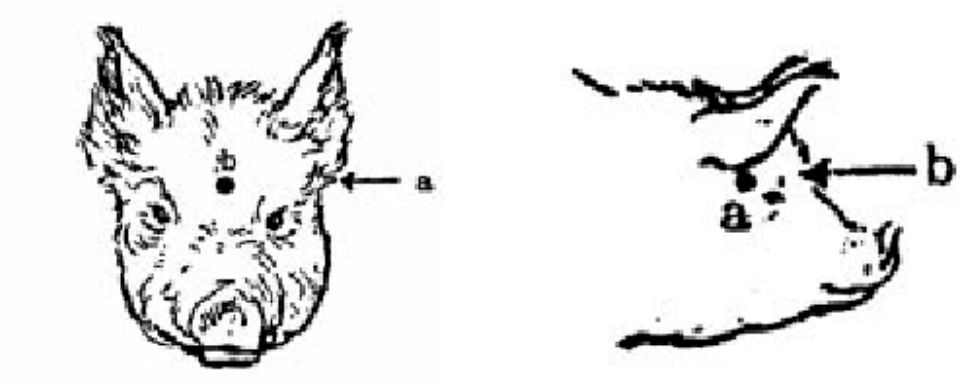

Figure 1: Humane destruction of pigs
"a" indicates recommended position for temporal method (Suitable for firearm only).
"b" indicates recommended position for frontal method (Suitable for firearm or captive-bolt pistol).