# SALEYARDS

# Code of practice
# for
# animals at saleyards
# in
# Western Australia

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# PREFACE

The **Code of practice for animals at saleyards in Western Australia** is based on *The Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals - Animals at Saleyards* 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 Animals at Saleyards 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

**CONTENTS**

# *1. INTRODUCTION*

This code of practice is intended as a guide to all stock handlers including truck drivers, stockmen, livestock agency staff, stock inspectors, producers, saleyard managers and their staffs involved in the management of animals of various species at saleyards.

The code aims to minimise stress in all livestock by encouraging efficient and considerate treatment and handling. It includes aspects of unloading, pre- and post-sale handling, the provision of feed, water, shelter and general care of livestock at saleyards.

Recommendations are also given for the care, treatment and humane emergency slaughter of sick, injured or "downer" animals.

This code should be read in conjunction with

- "Cattle – Code of practice for the transport of cattle in Western Australia"
- "Pigs – Code of practice for the transport of pigs in Western Australia"
- "Sheep – Code of practice for the transport of sheep in Western Australia"

Procedures at saleyards may subject animals to a number of stressful situations such as:

yarding and handling;
restricted access to food and/or water;
exposure to extremes of weather;
unfamiliar surroundings, noises and sensations;
mixing with unfamiliar animals;
overcrowding or isolation of animals;
exposure to infectious diseases.

Each species of animal needs to be handled differently and this code describes some methods of handling to minimise stress.

It is recommended that animals travelling long distances be given sufficient time after arrival at the saleyards to feed, water and rest in accordance with any pre-sale curfew restric-tions. Allowing for any rest period required, animals should be held in saleyards for as short a period as possible.

This code is based on knowledge and technology available at the time of publication and may need to be varied in the light of new knowledge and community expectations. Any measurements or dimensions quoted, are provided for guidance only, and are not intended to be prescriptive.

## 1. General

Saleyards should be sited away from fire and flood prone areas and, as far as is practical, from residential areas. They should be constructed and maintained appropriate to animal welfare and animal behavioural considerations. The responsibility for the maintenance and functioning of the saleyards should be clearly defined and publicised.

Prior advice of intention to consign stock, especially large numbers of stock, to saleyards is desirable to avoid overstocking of facilities.

Diseased, sick, injured or drought-weakened stock should not be consigned to, or processed through, saleyards.

# *2. MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL*

## 2.1 The Manager, Superintendent or Saleyards Supervisor

The manager, superintendent or supervisor of a saleyards complex has overall responsibility for the welfare, care and handling of animals at the saleyards. He is in charge of the day-to-day activities at the saleyards, either directly through the supervision of actions of saleyards staff or indirectly through the livestock agents and contract stockhandlers. He should ensure that high standards are maintained in relation to:

2.1.1 Stock handling by all handlers at the saleyards.

2.1.2 Appointment of staff competent in stockmanship.

2.1.3 Training and supervision of staff.

2.1.4 Feeding, watering and regular inspection of all animals when not in the care of owners or the owners' appointed agents.

2.1.5 Obtaining prompt veterinary attention for diseased, sick or injured animals and arranging removal of injured animals and/or carcasses from the yards. Subject to firearms legislation, a rifle and/or captive-bolt pistol should be kept at the yards and be readily accessible for use for emergency slaughter.

2.1.6 Appointment of stockmen responsible for loading, unloading and receiving of animals when the owner or the owner's appointed agent is not present.

2.1.7 Allocation of appropriate holding, drafting, selling and post-sale pens.

2.1.8 Maintenance of cleanliness and upkeep of the yard structures, buildings and facilities for the handling and housing of animals.

## *2.2 STOCKMEN AND/OR ANIMAL ATTENDANTS*

The importance of competent stockmanship to the welfare of livestock cannot be over-emphasised. The ability to recognise the early signs of distress and injury in animals is an important skill which enables prompt remedial action to be taken. Competent persons are required to use patience, commonsense and responsibility in dealing with animals. Inexperienced persons should not be given tasks requiring particular skills or be required to work alone at any time when animals are being handled. Inexperienced staff should be given training in stock handling by competent and skilled staff. This should emphasise the behavioural characteristics of stock.

Under no circumstances should cruelty or ill-treatment of animals be tolerated.

**Any reference to a person in this document is a reference to a person of any gender.**

# *3. STOCK HANDLING FACILITIES*

## 3.1 Ramp Design and Construction

Loading and handling facilities should be constructed so that they do not cause injury to animals.

Where possible, the vehicular approach to the ramp should have a slight fall backwards to enable the vehicle to be rolled into position gently. A flat vehicular area is preferable for side-loading vehicles.

The internal walls of ramps should be sheeted, smooth and high enough so that animals cannot be disturbed by activities outside the ramp and will not injure themselves. Safety exits should be provided for operator use.

Provision of a walkway for use by an attendant on the outside of the ramp will facilitate stock movement and is essential on sheeted ramps.

## 3.2 Design Considerations for Species

*Cattle and Horses*

Loading ramps should be wide enough to accommodate the hip width of mature animals. Excessive width may obstruct loading. It is suggested that an internal width of 760 mm will be sufficient for most animals. Sloping sides are recommended to facilitate the loading of stock of varying size.

Ramps should be constructed appropriate to the species of stock and the transports used. A flat platform at the top of the ramp should be level with the deck being unloaded and should be not less than 1.5 metres in length to assist loading and unloading. Suggested ramp heights are 1100-1200 mm from the ground for single deck or bottom deck, and 2800-2900 mm for top deck.

A slope not more than 1 in 3 (about 20°) is recommended for permanently installed ramps. The surface should be made of a non-slip material with either cross cleats, 40-50 mm wide spaced at 300mm centres or, if concrete, a suitably cross grooved pattern of steps to provide a good footing when the ramp is wet. Livestock prefer to walk up steps rather than inclines. Recommended dimensions are 300-500 mm treads and 90-100 mm risers.

Overhead bars on ramps used for horses should be of sufficient height to prevent head injuries to rearing horses.

*Pigs, lambs, sheep, goats and calves*

It is suggested that ramps be 500 mm wide for all species except pigs, where 900-1000 mm is recommended to accommodate two pigs side by side and prevents jamming.

A flat area or platform at least 1 metre in length, and ramp step with 250 mm treads and 50 mm risers or cross cleats 25 mm wide at 200mm centres, is recommended.

## 3.3 Holding Paddocks and Yards

Sufficient yards should be provided to avoid mixing different consignments of animals, and fences should be secure to prevent their escape.

Projections likely to cause injury should be completely eliminated from all fences and gates. Fences should be high enough to prevent animals mixing or escaping. Gates should be wide enough to allow easy flow of animals without injury. A minimum width of 2500 mm per gate is recommended.

An added safeguard to the welfare of stock held overnight is provided by dog-proof perimeter fencing. This is especially desirable for saleyards that are used for sheep or calves and situated near residential areas.

The provison of shade or cooling systems in hot climates and shelter from excessive cold for animals in holding facilities is desirable, recognising practical and economic limitations. Animals should be protected from extremes of weather.

## 3.4 Laneways and Races

Laneways and fences should be sheeted where appropriate to avoid animals being disturbed by outside activities and to direct them along desired pathways.

Properly designed curved sheeted races and forcing yards should be provided to facilitate the movement of animals.

It is undesirable for animals to be kept on concrete for prolonged periods. Concrete floors should have non-slip surfaces. Walkways for handlers and buyers separate to laneways for livestock, are recommended, especially for large cattle-selling centres. Overhead walkways should be constructed to minimise the casting of shadows in livestock laneways.

Facilities and procedures should aim to minimise dust and eliminate boggy conditions.

Drains should be constructed to avoid injury to animals and to ensure efficient drainage from pens and holding areas and sited so as not to impede the movement of animals.

A veterinary inspection crush should be available for individual treatment of cattle.

## 3.5 Drafting

Drafting facilities that utilise the natural tendency of livestock to follow one another are recommended. For drafting cattle, 360° overhead operated facilities are preferred.

Lighting should be installed to avoid, as far as possible, shadows and dark areas across laneways and in drafting yards, particularly where animals are drafted at night. Animals need to see a clear path in front of them. Noise levels should be kept to a minimum.

When drafting livestock, operators should allow time for the animals to see where they are required to move and to give them room to move. Rushing at animals only confuses them, and causes further stress, hindering the drafting operation.

## 3.6 Selling Pens and Holding Pens

Stocking densities appropriate to the species and the number and nature of animals involved, should not be exceeded. As a guide, 2.25 $m^2$ per beast is recommended for adult cattle in selling pens, and 2.7 $m^2$ in holding pens to allow easy movement and resting.

For sheep, 0.47 $m^2$ to 0.80 $m^2$ is suggested, depending on size of the animals and length of wool.

Lower densities should be used where there are calves or lambs at foot. Different classes of stock should be maintained separately as far as is practical.

## 3.7 Watering Facilities

Watering facilities should be provided in all receival yards and in any other yards or pens where animals may be held for more than 24 hours. Facilities should be provided to ensure that the following groups have access to cool clean drinking water:

- all animals that have been travelling for more than 24 hours or deprived of water for a total period of more than 24 hours;
- all animals held overnight; and
- all animals held in yards for more than 24 hours or lesser periods during hot weather.

Troughs should be constructed and located to minimise injury to animals and minimise fouling with faeces. They should be capable of being easily cleaned and should be cleaned before each sale.

Automatic watering equipment should be checked frequently to ensure that it is functioning. Water pressure should be adequate to keep water containers full at all times.

Water troughs or bowls can be situated on the boundary of two pens.

Small troughs are preferable to large troughs as they are more hygienic, provide fresher water and are less likely to injure or hinder stock. Troughs should not be less than 600mm long, 300mm wide and 300mm in depth, and should allow 15mm of trough length per sheep and 30mm per cattle beast in receival, delivery and spelling yards.

Nipple drinkers and bowls should not be used as the sole source of water for cattle or sheep. In earthen yards, concrete aprons or gravel 1000 mm wide should be provided around the watering points.

## 3.8 Curfews at Saleyards

No curfews should be used if they result in animals being off water for more than 24 hours.

## 3.9 Feeding at Saleyards

As a general rule animals should not be without food for more than 24 hours, including the time spent travelling and yarding. For immature animals the intervals between feeds should be correspondingly shorter.

The owner or agent is responsible for the feeding of livestock where this is neces-sary. Arrangements for feeding and watering should be made with the person in charge of the saleyards in the absence of the owner and agent.

## 3.10 Maintenance

Yards, gates and equipment should be maintained in good repair. Boggy areas should be filled with gravel if more permanent means of eliminating such conditions cannot be used.

## 3.11 Truck Washing Facilities

Truck cleaning facilities, i.e.sufficient water under high pressure and suitable drainage, should be provided at all saleyards.

# *4. LOADING AND UNLOADING*

## 4.1 Welfare Advantages of Efficient Handling

Animals should be unloaded as soon as practicable after arrival and in a manner that does not cause them injury. If they are allowed to walk quietly off the vehicle, injuries can be avoided.

Trucks should be correctly aligned with the ramp so that no gaps exist. Flaps or adjustable bumper rails should be used to avoid such gaps. Proper alignment with the race will ensure the smooth movement of animals and minimise the risk of injury and bruising.

Lighting should be provided for unloading at night. Lighting should be carefully positioned to give even light over ramps, races, yards and pens to avoid glare and to minimise shadows.

Because livestock tend to follow each other, sufficient area should be provided in forcing/receival yards during loading and unloading to allow them to move easily towards the target area.

A minimum forcing yard area of 30 $m^2$ is recommended for large stock for loading a 12 metre semi-trailer. A minimum forcing yard of 20 $m^2$ is recommended for sheep. A forcing yard with one straight and/or sheeted side can help to facilitate loading.

## 4.2 Methods of Assisting the Handling of Animals

Electric prods should be powered only by battery or hand dynamo and should not be more powerful than necessary. Their use should be restricted to the absolute minimum. The continual prodding of animals which have little or no room to move should not occur.

"Flappers" (a length of cane with a short strap of leather or canvas approximately 300 mm in length attached) or "metallic rattles", used sparingly, will encourage movement of animals. Sticks, lengths of heavy plastic, metal piping or heavy leather belts should not be used on stock.

Well-trained dogs can assist in loading, unloading and moving sheep. In confined areas they cause stress to sheep. Their use should be strictly limited to that necessary to complete the task. The use of dogs in lieu of appropriate yard design is not supported. Dogs should be muzzled, supervised at all times and secured when not working.

Dogs should not be used to work pigs.

The unloading area should be restricted to authorised persons only. Unloading should be supervised by experienced stockmen.

## 4.3 Separation of Animals During Holding

Animals of different species should not be mixed, in particular calves or sheep with pigs. Within species, unless they arrived in one consignment from a single point of origin, the following categories should be kept separated:

- females with suckling offspring;
- females known to be in advanced pregnancy;
- mature entire males;
- unfamiliar groups of pigs.

It is also desirable, whenever possible, to hold separately:

- hornless and horned animals;
- animals of significantly different sizes.

## 4.4 Unloading of Injured Animals

Healthy animals should be unloaded first, as quietly as possible, to minimise further injury to injured animals. Injured animals should be attended to without delay.

Severely injured animals should be humanely killed without delay. If a veterinarian is unavailable, this should be done by, or at the direction of, the person in charge of the saleyards. It is unacceptable to delay killing severely injured animals for any length of time. If in the judgement of a veterinarian or stock inspector an injury is minor and is not causing undue pain and/or distress, affected animals should be promptly segregated and treated.

Animals requiring emergency slaughter should be shot or stunned and bled without moving them further than necessary to effect euthanasia. It may be necessary to carry out emergency slaughter on the transport vehicle.

The practice of winching, or dragging by any means, living injured animals from transport vehicles is unacceptable. Unloading injured and moribund animals from trucks by tying them to a fixed object, such as a tree or ramp, and driving the transport vehicle away is equally condemned. Live animals should not be lifted by the head, horns, wool or legs.

The place for humane slaughter should be safe for the operator and persons nearby and should be able to be cleaned afterwards.

# *5. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OF SPECIES*

## 5.1 Pigs

Pigs are more susceptible to heat stress and sunburn than other livestock. They should not be exposed to long periods of direct sunlight or extremes of temperature. Panting is a sign of heat stress. Spray facilities should be provided for cooling animals.

Pigs should be unloaded immediately on arrival at the saleyards unless facilities exist for vehicles to park in a roofed area with spray facilities.

All procedures involving pigs including holding and selling should be conducted under a roofed area.

Pig holding pens should have non-slip floors impervious to moisture, and should have walls constructed so that pigs cannot fight with unfamiliar pigs in adjoining pens. Cool, drinkable water should be provided at all times in holding pens. Water troughs should be firmly fixed and the sides high enough to prevent fouling with faeces. Water troughs should have a minimum of 100 mm of trough length per pig. Where drinking bowls are used, at least one bowl should be provided for each 15 pigs. They should be regularly inspected and cleaned. It is suggested that holding pens should have not less than 0.47 $m^2$ per pig.

## 5.2 Bobby Calves

In unweaned or "bobby" calves, the junction of the umbilical cord and skin should be dry and the cord shrivelled. Calves which fail to meet these requirements should not be taken to saleyards.

It is desirable to provide a roofed area to protect calves from the sun. A sealed non-slip floor should also be provided. This floor should be hosed clean after each sale to minimise the risk of spread of disease.

Vehicles containing calves should be unloaded immediately on arrival at saleyards.

Calves are highly susceptible to scours and dehydration. They should be removed from saleyards as quickly as possible following sale. Bobby calves should not be held longer than 10 hours without being fed an appropriate liquid food.

## 5.3 Unweaned Lambs and Kids

The recommendations in regard to "bobby" calves also apply to lambs and kids. Lambs or kids under one week old should not be taken to saleyards.

## 5.4 Animals in Advanced Pregnancy

While it is not recommended that animals in advanced pregnancy be consigned to or sold through saleyards, it is recognised that this sometimes unavoidably occurs.

Such animals should be given special treatment in regard to handling, holding times and provision of feed and water.

## *6. INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES AT ABATOIRS*

Once management is advised of an impending dispute at abattoirs supplied by the saleyards, efforts should be made to limit further consignments of stock to those saleyards. It should be the responsibility of the person in charge of the saleyards to contact stock agents and media (radio and television) so that farmers are informed of the need to keep their stock on farms until the dispute is resolved.

Where stock are already at the saleyards, the person in charge should endeavor to arrange an "emergency kill" with a slaughtering establishment. If this is not possible, adequate feed and water must be provided for all livestock held at the saleyards during the dispute.

If arrangements cannot be made for the emergency slaughter of "bobby" calves at a registered establishment, they should be humanely killed at the saleyards without delay, if alternative satisfactory care cannot be arranged for them.

# *7. HUMANE DESTRUCTION OF STOCK*

Previous sections of this code have drawn attention to those circumstances in which stock may need to be humanely destroyed, for example following serious illness or injury.

While this task is an unpleasant one, the method of slaughter should be effective and cause sudden and painless death for the animal. It is equally important that the animal be handled quietly beforehand to ensure it is not unnecessarily distressed or alarmed.

The following recommended methods are those which are considered the most suitable at saleyards.

## 7.1 Use of Firearms

The most efficient and widely available method of humanely destroying livestock is a gunshot to the brain from close range. There may, however, be legal restrictions on the use of firearms in public places. Under those circumstances, assistance should be sought from a veterinary practitioner, the RSPCA, or the Police.

The folowing aspects of firearms safety should be kept in mind:

- A 0.22 calibre rifle or a 0.32 calibre humane killer pistol is adequate for humane destruction of most animals;
- 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 range should be as short as circumstances permit;
- Whilst the humane killer pistol and captive-bolt pistol are designed to be pressed firmly on the head prior to being discharged, it is not safe to do this with a standard rifle or pistol.

### 7.1.2 Use of the Captive-Bolt Pistol

An alternative to firearms is to use a captive-bolt pistol which is safer, because a blank cartridge is used. The operator does not have to be a marksman, as the instrument's muzzle is firmly pressed against the skull before firing. It must, however,

be assumed that the animal has only been stunned and a follow-up method of ensuring death, such as bleeding out, is required.

Blank cartridges for the captive-bolt pistol are colour-coded according to the amount of charge they contain. For best results, the manufacturer's recommendations should be followed as to the most appropriate blank cartridge for different animals. Regular maintenance of the captive-bolt pistol is essential for efficient stunning.

## 7.2 Special Requirements of Stock

### 7.2.1 Horses

A head collar or bridle should be put on the animal to enable it to be quietly restrained by an assistant who must stand out of the line of fire. Restless animals should be blind-folded.

Temporal method: only suitable for firearms. The horse is shot from the side so that the bullet enters the skull midway between the eye and the base of the ear on the same side of the head. The bullet should be directed horizontally (see Figure 1).

Frontal method: the captive-bolt pistol or firearm should be directed at the point of intersection of diagonal lines taken from the base of each ear to to the opposite eye. The bullet should be directed at right angles (90 degrees) to the slope of the head, to ensure the brain is damaged.

Only a suitably designed captive-bolt pistol* should be used to destroy horses. The manufacturer's instructions must be followed for best results. Major blood vessels of the neck should be severed as soon as possible, taking care to avoid injury caused by the animal's involuntary movements.

### 7.2.2 Cattle

Frontal method: the captive-bolt pistol or firearm should be directed at the point of intersection of lines taken from the base of each ear to the opposite eye (see Figure 2).

Temporal method: only suitable for firearms. The animal is shot from the side so that the bullet enters the skull midway between the eye and the base of the ear on the same side of the head. The bullet should be directed horizontally.

When the animal has been stunned using a captive-bolt pistol, it should be bled out as soon as it collapses by severing the major vessels of the neck. To avoid injury due to the animal's involuntary leg movements, the operator should stand behind the neck.

### 7.2.3 Sheep

*Hornless sheep and rams:*

The firearm or captive-bolt pistol should be placed just behind the poll and aimed in the direction of the animal's muzzle (position *a* in Figure 3); or
The firearm aimed from the side of the head at a point midway between the eye and the base of the ear (position *b* in Figure 3); or
The captive-bolt pistol placed on top of the head and fired vertically downwards (position *c* in Figure 3).

*Horned sheep and rams:*

The firearm is aimed at a point in the middle of the face just above the level of the eyes and aimed along the neck (position *a* in Figure 4); or
The captive-bolt pistol placed behind the poll and aimed in the direction of the animal's muzzle (position *b* in Figure 4).

### 7.2.4 Pigs

Frontal method: the captive-bolt pistol or firearm should be directed at a point about midway across the forehead and (for adult pigs) about 2 cm above the level of the eyes (Figure 5). When using a firearm, aim horizontally into the skull.

Temporal method: 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.

### 7.2.5 Goats

Using either a captive-bolt pistol or firearm, direct the instrument to the skull behind the horns as shown by the point of the arrow in Figure 6. Aim the firearm in line with animal's mouth, and take care that no one is in the line of fire.

*Figure 1:* humane destruction of horses

*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).

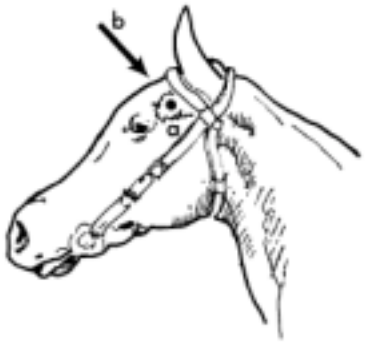




*Figure 2:* Humane destruction of cattle

*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).


*The CASH SPECIAL and Model 8000 COWPUNCHER are claimed to be suitable; for horses. They are available from:

Donald Mackintosh Abattoirs Pty Ltd 473 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne Vic. 3000 [Phone: (03) 329 6100]

Fig. 3

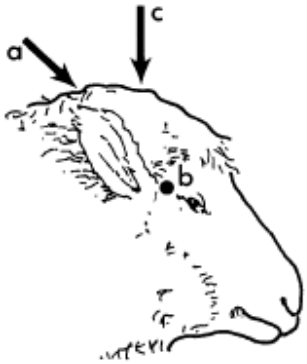
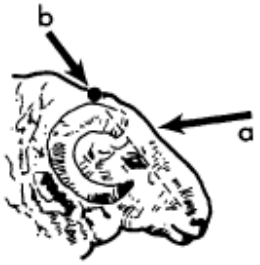



Fig. 4



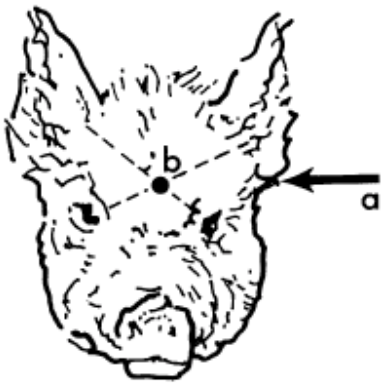





*Figure 5:* Humane destruction of

*a* indicates recommended positic
poral method (suitable for firearm

*b* indicates recommended positior
method (suitable for firearm or c
pistol).

## *8. BLEEDING OUT OF SHEEP AND GOATS WITHOUT PRE-STUNNING*

Bleeding-out of sheep and goats only, without pre-stunning, is a humane alternative method of slaughter provided it is done by a skilled person using a suitable, sharp knife. The animal should be laid on its side and the head drawn back. The neck is quickly cut transversely completely through to the spine just behind the jaw bone. In addition, the skilled operator may dislocate the neck by lifting the muzzle and quickly making a downward thrust on the back of the head.

This method is not suitable for calves because an additional blood supply to the brain enables the animal to remain conscious for a considerable time after the throat is cut.