



Animal Welfare Institute

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Humane Slaughter Repeat Offenders

Case #1 (2 suspensions in 3 months)

USDA suspended a small South Carolina plant when an inspector observed an employee attempt to stun a cow with a hand-held bolt gun and seriously injured the cow but failed to render the animal unconscious. According to the USDA, “the stun gun was stuck to the animal’s head because the stun gun bolt became imbedded in the back of the animal’s head.” The stun operator “just stood there” until instructed to get another stun gun and re-stun the animal. Three months later the plant was suspended again when an employee was observed aggressively and repeatedly using an electric prod on multiple animals. The animals’ bellowing and kicking in response to the prodding convinced the inspector that the employee’s action had caused “undue suffering.”

Case #2 (4 suspensions in 6 months)

A very small calf slaughter plant in Vermont was suspended a total of four times within a six-month period for improper handling of animals too weak to stand or walk. The plant was suspended for one day after an employee was observed dragging a non-ambulatory week-old calf. A month later the plant was again suspended for one day when an employee was seen picking up and dropping a calf from a truck. Another one-day suspension followed the next month when an employee dragged two non-ambulatory calves down a ramp from the upper deck of a truck. Then three months later, the plant was suspended indefinitely after employees were observed dragging a calf by one leg and repeatedly applying an electric prod to another disabled calf in an attempt to force the animal to stand. After four egregious incidents, the USDA District Manager concluded that the plant was “either unable or unwilling to maintain regulatory compliance with respect to humane handling requirements.”

Case #3 (6 suspensions in 18 months)

Arguably one of the worst records belongs to a very small plant in North Carolina that was suspended by the USDA six times in an 18-month period for egregious humane slaughter incidents. Five of the incidents involved a “stun mishap in which an animal was injured by multiple unsuccessful stun attempts, but was left conscious.” In the remaining incident, a plant employee on a loading dock ramp was observed repeatedly hitting a disabled pig with a barrel lid. “The hog was sitting up but unable to stand on its back legs. The animal squealed each time it was hit with the lid. When the hog reached the top of the ramp leading to the lower pen area the USDA inspector witnessed this same employee then kick the hog and it squealed loudly as it slid half way down the ramp.”

Case #4 (2 suspensions in 1 month)

Slaughter operations at a very small plant in Texas were suspended when an employee was observed shooting a bull with a firearm a total of five times before the animal was rendered unconscious. After one day the plant was allowed to resume operations, but less than three weeks later the suspension was reinstated when the USDA food safety inspector observed an employee shoot a steer three times before managing to render the animal unconscious.

Case #5 (18 citations & 3 suspensions in 8 months)

A large pig slaughter plant in Minnesota was cited 18 times within an eight-month period for various inhumane handling and slaughter infractions, including failure to provide water to animals in pens, failure to maintain facilities in good repair, excessive use of force in driving animals, and cutting a still-conscious animal. Three of the incidents were considered egregious and resulted in plant suspension. In one such incident an employee was seen shocking an animal with an electric prod multiple times on the face. In another incident a truck driver was observed chasing and striking animals with a paddle. The USDA inspector “witnessed this person make contact, using the narrow portion of the paddle, with the hog on multiple swings. Vocalization was heard coming from this direction and the hog was being chased and hit was obviously excited and appeared stressed.”

Case #6 (2 suspensions in 1 ½ months)

A small slaughter plant in Oregon was cited for not providing water for cattle in holding pens on two occasions about three weeks apart. A few months later, the plant was written up again for failure to provide water to animals in the holding barn. Two weeks after that, the plant was shut down for an incident of egregious cruelty where a plant employee made several unsuccessful attempts to stun a steer, “then put a chain around the animal’s back feet and started to hoist it while the animal exhibited signs of consciousness.” After a few hours, the plant was allowed to resume slaughter operations but was suspended a second time about a month later when an employee was again observed making multiple unsuccessful attempts to stun an animal for slaughter.

Case #7 (7 citations & 2 suspensions in 1 year)

A small plant in California was cited for not maintaining its premises in a manner that prevents injury or pain to animals. Within a few days the plant was suspended for an egregious violation of the humane slaughter law. Less than a month later, the plant was cited again for failure to maintain pens and other facilities in good repair and for failure to provide water in the holding pens. Four months after that the plant was cited for improperly stunning a calf by placing the bolt device on the wrong area of the head. Less than six months later the plant was again suspended for a humane slaughter violation. While following up on that suspension, a USDA veterinary specialist observed another calf being improperly stunned. “The calf did not drop but instead wheeled violently away from the blow and stumbled to the corner of the stunning area with blood spurting from the wound.” All told, the plant received at least seven citations in one year, two of which were egregious and led to suspension.

Case #8 (13 citations & 2 suspensions in 1 year)

USDA cited a large plant in Iowa for an incident in which a pig died by means other than humane slaughter and may have drowned in the scald tank. Two weeks later, an inspector identified another animal that was not bled properly and died by means other than slaughter. Another similar incident occurred two months later. The plant successfully appealed all three citations; however, several months later the plant was suspended for an egregious humane handling violation when a truck driver was observed using a board to push a disabled pig head-first down a ramp. Less than six months after that a similar incident occurred in which a truck driver was seen intentionally “walking on top” of three sleeping pigs. All together, during a one-year period the plant was cited at least 13 times, twice for egregious violations that resulted in suspension.