

Responsible Down Standard In-Person Meeting

October 12, 2017

Notes:

ISEAL membership.

Following their processes since 2013. After an application process, TE has been accepted as associate members. In order to qualify for full membership and meet all the ISEAL requirements, we need to make some small changes to the IWG process. This includes the change from steering committee to participating member structure. In this approach, you are allowed to vote as long as you sign a charter which covers e.g.:

- agreeing to certain rules of conduct.
- Abiding by chatham house rules.
- Value of openness and transparency.

Updates:

Looking at potential areas to strengthen to better meet goals:

- Parallel production
- Stunning before slaughter
- Euthanasia
- Bill trimming

Understand what the current issues are

Understanding what questions remain to be answered in order to make a decision.

Parallel production

Redefining parallel production at the processor level

Understanding that there is a need for both certified and non-certified material.

RDS allows companies at slaughterhouse and processor level to buy and sell live plucked material. It is a weakness of the current standard and the criticism from Peta of this is justified. As non-certified material could be force fed this is against the spirit of the standard. How do we redefine what non-certified material means?

There is a concern that there is a potential for mixing, if certified slaughterhouses or processors are not 100% certified and TCs are not checked the buyer might not be getting RDS down. The final point relates to cruelty, allowing parallel production supports companies with poor practices related to animal welfare.

Recommendations:

- Ideally prohibit parallel production at all levels
- Prohibit parallel production on slaughterhouse level.
- Would be helpful if it was clearly communicated which suppliers do not practice parallel production.

Comments / feedback on parallel production:

- Challenges with changing the definition?
- It does not make sense to certify RDS slaughterhouse – receiving animals from different farms, cannot separate lot by lot – not possible to ban parallel production – slaughter house is verified not certified.
- TC issue – and the limitation of the RDS that you only know the last point of contact. This can be overcome by working with suppliers.

Bill trimming

Feather pecking and cannibalism are results of intensive keeping system. Bill trimming addresses the symptom rather than the causes of feather pecking.

(add details from 4-Paws slides)

Recommendations:

- Ashley to share research on infra-red beak trimming, will share via the Farm Task Group

Discussion:

Support the recommendations from Four Paws as this is not a pain free method and it does not solve the problem of the inadequacy of the system as the problem is with the environment. Have to make an adjustment to the environmental requirements rather than allow bill trimming.

There are conflicting comments suggesting that bill trimming is seen as good animal welfare practice in some places. *(Need to ensure that we have relevant evidence to support these claim, to be provided via the Farm Task Group)*

Action: provide further detail around recommendations around bill trimming from key producing regions and detail around the animal welfare implications.

Input from NSF regarding Traceable Down Standard and North America farms – issue of bill trimming is not explicit in the standard instead it takes a results-based approach to animal welfare.

Recognition of the need to drive change but that it is also an uphill battle when dealing with a by-product of the food industry.

Stunning before slaughter

High potential rates of failed stunning.

Recommendations

- Make the minor rec. a major in the revision
 - to be covered via the Slaughter Task Group

(see slide for details)

Discussion:

Stunning before slaughter is an important issue. It is important that the right electrical parameter is used therefore it is important that the right stunning requirements are part of the RDS. The standard should not just require stunning but also specify the frequency etc.

China is the largest down producer by far. A concern was raised that a challenge is that the meat will be less sellable if electrical stunning is used. There has been some work on alternative methods e.g. humane slaughter with knife and possibly on other stunning methods e.g. percussive stunning.

Action: Explore this issue in further detail (market requirements, alternative methods of humane slaughter) via the Slaughter Task Group

Euthanasia

(add details on issue from slide)

Training and Education Needs:

- Farmer training on euthanasia is required.
- Worker training on stunning before slaughter
- General animal husbandry for the farmer, the benefits of stronger animal welfare practices (establishing the link between productive and animal welfare) Training should lead with the practical aspects of animal care rather than animal welfare as the concept of animal welfare is very new in some regions. However, it is also important to frame why there is a need to change what in some cases are very old practices.
- Farmer training on euthanasia should include OH&S.
- Graphic SOP's are a useful tool. If there is content that needs to be followed by farm hands in regions where literacy is an issue the SOP's need to be very graphic. (The Global Animal Partnership has visual score cards).

Other comments:

Is there an opportunity to explore incentives such as a bonus related to e.g. mortality rates?

The slaughterhouse key connection.

Need to consider not just cultural differences but also generational differences. Some practices that the standard is aiming to change is how things have been done for generations.

Action:

- **The Task Groups will write up a white paper on the four animal welfare topics that have been discussed (AW)**
- **Training and education will be put into different streams of work to look at individually**

Other issues:

- There are no clear requirements on density per square metre. This should be included in the standard.
- Opportunities for regional adaptation of the standard
- Goal of the standard
- How do you measure animal welfare – opportunity for animal based measures?
- The pros and cons of different label grades
- The need for more clarity around the actual economic benefits at the different stages?
- Possibilities for involving academic institutions