

Establishment: Vermont Packinghouse LLC
Inspection date: June 3, 2024
Inspection type: Directed
Inspection task name: Livestock Humane Handling

HATS Category 2 - Truck Unloading

On Monday, 3 June 2024, at approximately 15:25, Inspector REDACTED was observing truck unloading of market swine at M45029 (Vermont Packinghouse) and witnessed inhumane animal handling and truck unloading by the driver and no intervention by establishment employees supervising the process. Witnessed inhumane handling by the inspector included all animals being suspected of suffering from heat stroke at time of arrival (transit time from NY farm to M45029 stated by driver to be eight hours) without any intervention by the establishment and the driver was observed kicking the animals in the head/neck while trying to move the livestock within and off the trailer. Witnessed inhumane truck unloading by the inspector included the driver pushing the animals off the back of the trailer with some falling over and rolling on their backs. The trailer deck was approximately a little more than one foot above the ground and every pig stopped at the edge, refused to jump, which was followed by the pigs being pushed off the edge. This was when the inspector contacted the SPHV.

Upon arrival and further observation, the SPHV witnessed and concurred with the inspector's findings. While performing a directed livestock humane handling verification task at establishment M45029, the SPHV observed the following humane handling noncompliance. The SPHV witnessed almost all market swine refusing to stand or move in the trailer and all with severely elevated respiratory rates. Due to no ramp being present or maintained by the establishment for trailers unable to utilize the large bovine ramp, pigs were observed being pushed off the trailer causing them to be more stressed with some stumbling, falling, and rolling over on their back after striking the ground. It should be noted here that without a ramp the height of the trailer deck to the ground is too much for a pig to exit on their own safely and with minimal excitement per the SPHV's opinion after witnessing this incident. The unloading area for these trailer-types should be re-evaluated and addressed so pigs may walk off the trailer with both minimal excitement and manipulation. The pigs observed to be already pushed off the trailer and in the barn were all laterally recumbent and panting heavily. No interventions by the establishment were taken in the barn to address this immediate animal welfare concern. These signs were diagnosed by the SPHV as suffering from the onset or progression of Porcine Stress Syndrome (PSS) or malignant hyperthermia due to transport, which is a well-documented concern in swine, especially during or after transport in warm weather. The SPHV noted no obvious plan to address this type of situation (i.e. swine arrive at the establishment with heat-stroke during transport in the summer months).

Further observations by the SPHV during unloading was the attempt to use water to spray the pigs and encourage their movement off the trailer and cool them down. Unfortunately, the only water available near the truck underloading area was hot water and provided no help in moving the animals and cooling them. After the "hot water" implementation, no change was made by the establishment to find/utilize cool water during the entire incident, which lasted more than one hour and half.

REDACTED (Establishment Administrator and HACCP coordinator) was notified the following day of the noncompliance and the establishment's failure to adhere to the regulatory requirements of 9 CFR 313.1(a) and (b) and 313.2(a).

This document serves as written notification that your failure to comply with regulatory requirement(s) could result in additional regulatory or administrative action.